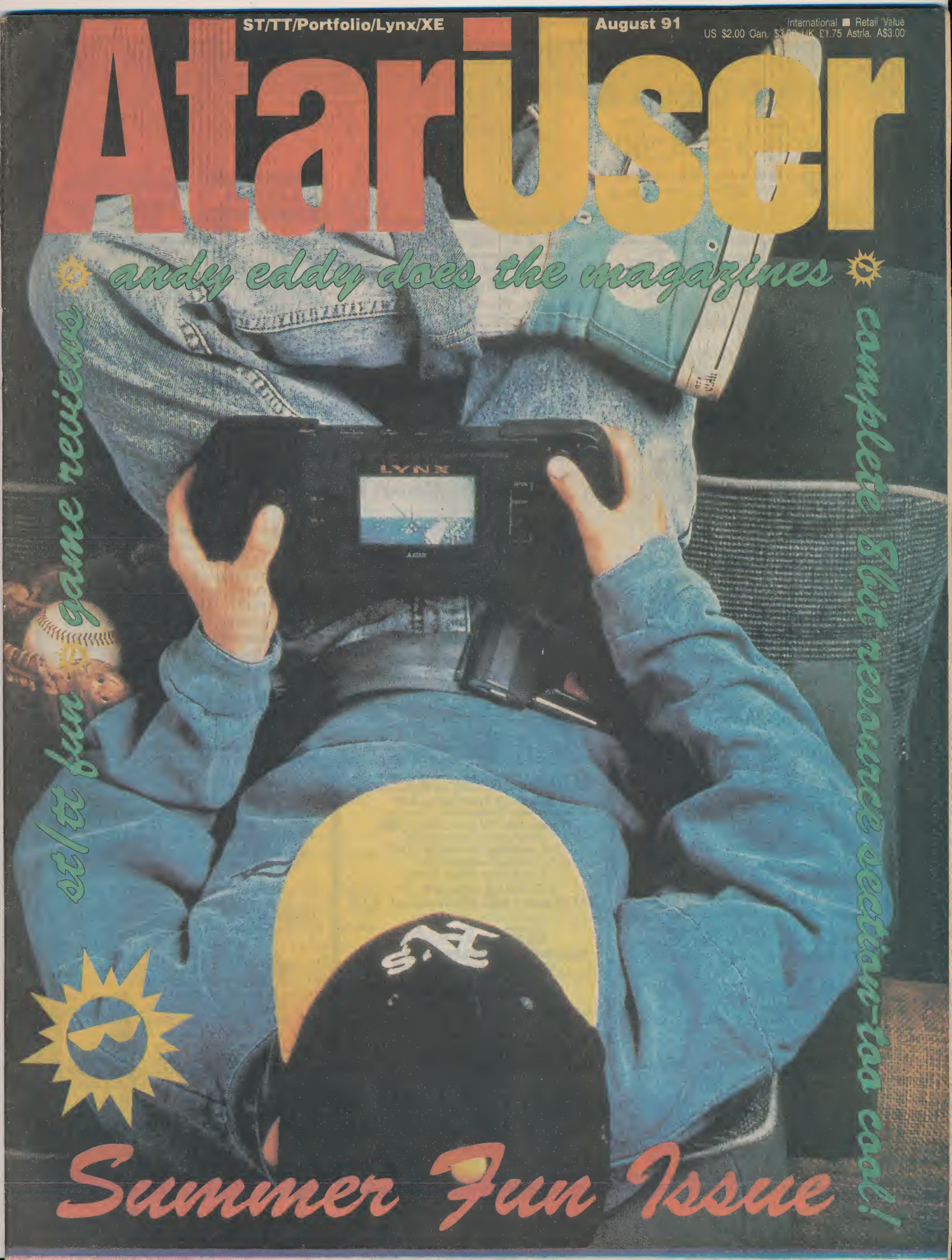
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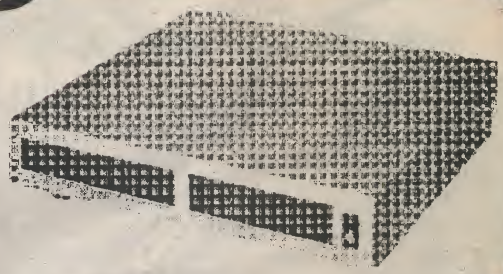

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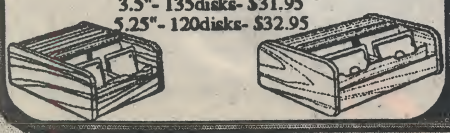

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Summertime READS ATARILAND STYLE

Veteran Atari magazine Editor Andy Eddy rates and berates all the Atari publications available in America. You might be surprised at the number of magazines available for your favorite machine. See if you agree with the Eddyometer! **Feature begins on page 20.**

Read Me!

At the risk of drawing fire from thousands of Atari fans who will say that AtariUser is helping to fuel the "game machine" image of Atari—here's a *Summer Fun* issue! *Yes*, the Atari does *great* games and entertainment—and, as AtariUser is dedicated to all uses of Atari's, we'd be remiss to leave the entertainment aspects behind for purely political reasons.

Hence, *Summer Fun*. We've got an issue-wide focus on ways to enjoy your liesure time with the Atari product line. Jim Pierson-Perry has a collection of games that feature MIDI music. BJ Gleason found a slew of Portfolio pastimes, as does Chuck Steinman for the 8-bit computers.

But the centerpiece for this August AtariUser is a fine and comprehensive look at eight Atari publications produced here in the USA.

We welcome readers in Australia this month. AtariUser is now being distributed by Atari Corp. Australia! We now have regular distribution in the US, Canada, England, and Australia, and readers in over 12 countries.

Next month, AtariUser will tackle storage... with a focus on hard drives, floppy upgrades, and even CD ROMs... for all the Atari systems. Even the Lynx..? We'll see!

—John Nagy, AtariUser Editor-in-Chief

Columns!

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Great stuff shown off at CES. New games released.

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Take a break! A few all-time great games.

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Games on your Portfolio..? Ya, no kiddin'.

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Game soundtracks and how they work. 'Sounds' like fun.

▲ **Note** Most of our usual columns return next month.

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Resource!

Everything *(just about)* **8Bits / 31**

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Mark Krynsky on the 'Game Machine'

Mention the word Atari to almost anyone and ask them what is the first thing that comes to mind, and you can almost bet that the word "game machine" will quickly be uttered. This is understandable, since to this day we can look back and see Atari's 2600 incredible popularity as it became the first full fledged game system to be sold to the masses, and to this day remains the mother of all game machines.

Game machines have always tried to get a portion of the computer market by offering add-ons such as keyboards and non-game software. Atari has been the only company able to flourish both in the game market as well as the computer market. Coleco bombed with their eventual release of a computer called "Adam". (Hmmm... come to think of it, Apple bombed with their system called "Lisa", maybe companies should stay away from naming computers after people.)

■ "As time goes on, I think we will see the evolution of game machines and computers continuing. Although there could eventually be a merging of these two technologies, I don't think we will see one machine that will be able to excel equally in both areas and become adopted as an all purpose system..."

Well, not too long after the release of the 2600, Atari set its sites higher and decided to design a computer line. This brought about the 8 bit line of computers as well as a new generation of game machines with better graphics and sound. It has continually remained a trend for Atari to sell computers and game machines concurrently. The game machines are sold in drastically larger numbers and are always launched by large advertising campaigns. The advertising is almost non-existent when it comes to the computer line. This is one of the main reasons Atari has been associated almost entirely with games over the years.

Although they are trying harder than ever to make a clear distinction between the game and computer division, Atari still remains the innovator in the game arena. With the release of the Lynx, Atari became the first company to have a handheld color game system. This was a wise pursuit since the home console market has become so extremely competitive.

From the birth of the 520ST to the current TT030 we can see that Atari has evolved its computer line to be as powerful as the machines offered from Apple and IBM. This is not to deny that great games have been available for the Atari computer line as well, but unfortunately the company's image has affected the ability for people to take an open-minded look when interested in purchasing a computer. It can also seem quite ironic that games for all other computer lines sell in much larger quantities in comparison to Atari. Most of the new software being released, especially for the TT line, is on a professional level and even after the pursuit of big business. Games are taking a back seat to this new image Atari is trying to project in the hopes of penetrating through to the corporate level.

At our store (The Computer Network, a full service Atari dealer) I would say that games comprise only 30% of our total software sales. Ordering and stock balancing is very difficult when it comes to games. Most of them don't carry much more than a thirty day shelf life, if that, and it can become quite a tedious task to second guess which games are going to be hot sellers. On the other hand, application titles such as word processors or DTP programs we carry have been steady sellers for over three years. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule such as Dungeon Master, which broke new boundaries in adventure games and still outsells most new releases.

At this time, I see the Atari computer line becoming more focused on specializing in certain areas. Music seems to be a stronghold for the market, and all levels of desktop publishing are great forces for the ST/TT line, but it can not be denied that these computers are great for playing games. Real computers add an extra dimension of control and at times the necessary horsepower that some games demand to make them better than those found on dedicated game machines.

As time goes on, I think we will see the evolution of game machines and computers continuing. Although there could eventually be a merging of these two technologies, I don't think we will see one machine that will be able to excel equally in both areas and become adopted as an all purpose system.

With the continuing release of new and innovative technology, I would have to predict that Atari will continue to be successful in their pursuit of both the game and computer markets. —*Mark Krynsky* ■

▲ AtariUser Magazine offers this space each month to members of our community, to express themselves on matters of interest to AtariUsers. Mike Vederman over at Double Click reminded us to remind you that the viewpoints presented on this page are not necessarily those of AtariUser Magazine—thanks Mike.

▲ **Mark Krynsky** is co-owner of The Computer Network, a successful Atari dealership in Glendale, California (1605 W. Glenoaks, Glendale, CA 91201, 818-500-3900). Mark has been selling ATARI computers for over six years. He particularly loves customers who bring in mail order ads with cut rate prices or who come in and want help using software for which they have no manual.

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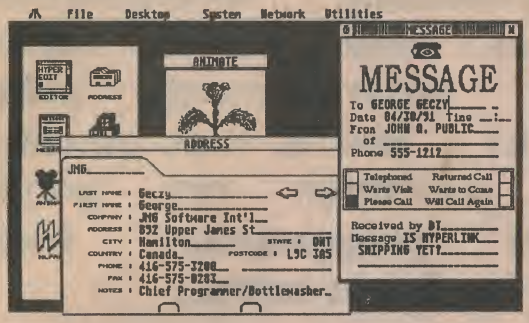

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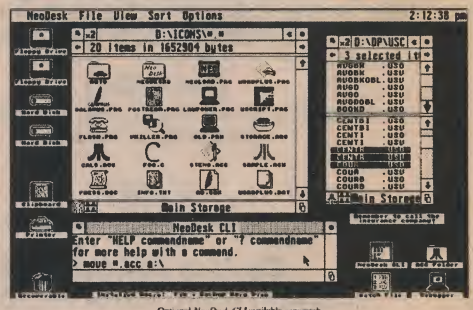

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Way Big Show, Way Big Deals

▼ Z*NET'S ATARIUSER NEWSWIRE FOR AUGUST 1991

■ **August will bring the world's largest Atari show ever, anywhere.** The Dusseldorf Atarimesse is an annual event in Germany that will bring perhaps 40,000 visitors this year on August 23-25. It will feature an Atari North America booth for the first time, and Atari is even offering free booth space for any U.S. developers who will go to Germany to show their wares. Traditionally a great place for cross-pollination of intercontinental software, the Atarimesse should also boast a major product announcement from Atari. This year, the hush-hush product is expected to be SOFTWARE, unusual for Atari. Firmer availability predictions for the ST BOOK and STYLUS should also be possible. For booth info, contact Atari USA via Bill Rehbock at 408-745-2000. General show info is available from Alwin Stumph, Frankfurterstrasse 89-91, 6096 Raunheim, or phone 49-6142-2090, FAX 49-6142-209180.

■ **Atari Corp has released the new XCONTROL PANEL for the STe and TT.** The distribution file contains full documentation and the CPX control files. XControl features all the setting controls from the familiar Control Panel, plus a graphic interface for a number of the STe's special functions, like stereo sound balance and tone. A turning face wearing headphones faces one way or another as you swing the balance of sound from right to left. But the most powerful feature is the ability to load and control CPXs (Control Panel eXtensions), program modules which can be accessed through XControl. Extensions can act like desk accessories or AUTO programs, with more control over memory use and unloading without rebooting. Atari's new FSM GDOS is controlled through a CPX, much like the font manager on a MAC. Although a few functions are exclusive to STe and/or TT030 computers, older ST machines can use the XControl as well. The documentation also advises about potential memory reallocation problems that will require rebooting older machines after reconfiguration. With the release of XControl, third party developers are beginning to respond with CPX modules of their own. Double Click Software has announced a CPX utilities package with five CPXs for disk/file management and a game, with a commercial release in August. XControl is available as a downloadable file on GEnie, CompuServe, and most BBS systems.

■ **The Pacific Northwest Atari Festival was held** in Canadian Richmond B.C., a suburb of Vancouver, on June 15th & 16th. Despite much publicity and advertising, total attendance for the two days was under nine hundred people, while over two thousand were expected. Father's Day Sunday also contributed to the low turnout. While attendance was light, many dealers and developers reported brisk sales for the event. Compo, Rimik, Infinite Grafix, ICD, Wizard Computers, ISD, Minitronics, Branch Always and all of the Music dealers all had excellent sales reports. Zubair Interfaces and Omnimon Peripherals reported poor sales, and others fell somewhere in between. Hardware, both Atari and third party, sold BIG and FAST. Software, especially established titles, sold SLOW. Compo Software flew in from England with That's Write and Write On. Rimik had the new multi-tasking system from Germany called Multi-Gem, which should be shipping by press time. Musicode was showing their MIDI and games software, and Blackjack Plus was surely a hit. Nathan Potechin from ISD gave two of the many seminars, which included the always popular Dave Small seminar. This was the first Western Canada Atari show, and another is being discussed for next year.

■ **BBS EXPRESS ST V1.70 has been released as an upgrade** for registered subscribers. New features abound on the ST bulletin board system, including improved prompt control, chat enhancements, use of the system file selector box, and more. The purchase price is still $79.95 and includes two disks, documentation, Script examples, and the Script language Compiler. A year of unlimited updates downloadable via one of the many support BBSes is $15 if purchased when you get the BBS, otherwise $25 a year. T2 Ltd., P.O. Box 1947, Fontana, CA 92334-1947

■ **Appearing on the back cover of the latest DAMARK "Great Deal Catalog"** is the familiar Atari SX-212 1200 baud modem for only $29.99. According to Atari, about 10,000 of the Hayes compatible 300/1200 modem were sold, cash in advance, to the Damark liquidation and close-out specialty mail order company. The SX-212 features the standard RS232 port for use on any computer, plus the 8-Bit Atari SIO port that allows use on an 8-Bit Atari without further adapters or interfaces. At $29, it is an unbeatable bargain despite its lack of 2400 baud speeds. Damark Item Number B-373-181504 from catalog B-373-2329, call 800-729-9000 to order.

■ **CodeHead Software announced CodeHead Utilities - Release 4.** It features a reset-proof printer and disk spooler, slideshow viewer, fast disk cloning system, keyboard enhancer for handicapped users, TT compatibility, desk accessory text editor, resource file converter, and more. 34 programs are included on two disks. The spooler is unusual in that you can perform a printing operation and reset your computer, the printer will pick up exactly where you left off without missing a beat. Or, save your printer data to a standard disk file that can be printed at any time, with or without a print spooler, meaning you can save the raw printer data of a DTP document and reprint it at any time without even running your DTP program again! CodeHead Utilities are $34.95. As a current owner of CodeHead Utilities, you can obtain an update by sending your original master disk and $10. CodeHead Software, P.O. Box 74090, Los Angeles, CA 90004, (213) 386-5735, FAX (213) 386-5789, BBS (213) 461-2095.

■ **High-tech liquidator DAK offered the PC-ready brother of the Atari SLM804 laser printer for only $699 in recent catalogs.** LaserPro built the SLM804 for Atari, and their Silver Express model is nearly identical to the Atari version. Remaining quantities of the now out-of-production line were sold to DAK, who has sold out, according to inquiries this week. But all is not lost, as DAK signed agreements that should assure Toner and Drum availability for another five years. Since these items directly interchange with Atari's SLM804, owners of the "obsolete" printer can easily get supplies for years to come. Toner is available for $49 (order number 5848), and drum kits are $199 (order number 5849), each plus shipping. Ask for their great catalog. DAK, 800-325-0800, 8200 Remmet Ave, Canoga Park, CA 91304.

■ **While the honest world waits for the new super-desktop publisher** release from Ditek, Calamus SL, the pirate network has already begun trade of the German Beta version throughout the world. Nathan Potechin of ISD, the North American distributor for Calamus, tells us that he has discovered part of the pirate network, and was doubly disappointed to find that some of the "distributors" were people he personally knew and to whom he had provided considerable customer support. With friends like these... ■

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Party, EA RIP Not, NewDesk? Ad Flap

Hey, it's Summer. You don't want lots of news clogging the brain, do ya? OK, I'll keep it short and light this month. I have to get MY sun, too!

PARTY!

July 3 marked the *seventh* anniversary of the Tramiel Atari Corp. It was in 1984 that Warner Communications gave up trying to sell a machine they didn't understand to a market that Jack Tramiel (pictured) had personally shaped. Jack had just left Commodore where he had made the C64 into *the choice* for small home computers, despite a limited operating architecture and a dubious price advantage over the Atari line. The "family way" of the Tramiel's wasn't favored at Commodore, so Jack and the kids quit and bought the competition. And Atari began a new phase.

Jack and sons Sam, Leonard, and Garry held a company pizza party on July 3 to celebrate the past and to toast the future. Attending were the new crew at Sunnyvale who we all hope will help make that future brighter than the past: Bob Brodie, Bill Rehbock, and others. Honored guest was Kent Fillmore, product manager of GEnie Telecommunication Service, who was visiting to find out more about the company that motivates the busiest area on his international system.

The party followed additional layoffs at Atari US, Canada, and Mexico. The sweeping consolidations and closings that were broadcast by a few sources did not come to pass, and there is plenty of Atari left.

NO R.I.P. FOR E.A. ST

A rumor we can happily debunk this month is that Electronic Arts is dropping the Atari line. EA has periodically announced that they were pulling out of the Atari market, but they have just as repeatedly been back with more titles. Recently, though, EA made several changes in operation that does impact their ST lineup.

EA in the USA will be producing exclusively MS-DOS product, while the European branch will handle the Mac, Amiga, and Atari product. While this is likely to reduce the number of Atari titles from EA that reach the USA, it will certainly not eliminate them. Some reports of the situation said that EA was shunning the Atari market altogether.

A sidelight of the EA situation that will probably impact the Atari market more is their decision to end their publishing of affiliated labels. EA has published and distributed software for Lucasfilm, Ocean, Cinemaware, and others, with a lot of ST software included. These companies now must (and will) find another production house for their titles.

MORE NEWDESK

Gribnif's Rick Flashman contacted AtariUser after reading last month's TT column about the new desktop from Atari. He wants us to make it clear that "Newdesk" is not Atari's name for the improved GEM interface, and that the word NewDesk is to close to his company's registered trademark, NewDesk, for comfort or legality. Atari nas not named the desktop—users have come to call it "Newdesk" on their own. As Atari does not plan to sell the new desktop, it probably won't even get an official name. Clear enough?

Clearing up two other details from the same story: Derek Mui, named as the originator of "newdesk", indeed works for Atari, and although it premiered in Germany, the desktop was programmed here in the USA.

AD FLAP

We've also eaten lead about one of our advertisers in the last two issues. Claims are numerous about how they are advertising vapor at imaginary prices, perhaps in order to damage individuals or the marketplace in general. We're working on this—and rest assured, AtariUser won't be a party to private vendettas or market-ruining behavior. By anyone. You see, on the flip side of this issue are a cluster of folk who'd like to dictate policy to magazines.

We make AtariUser available by selling ads, *not* by selling magazines. So it's a serious matter to talk about refusing ads while we're struggling to expand. Our position is in flux right now—we want to work with the individual problem areas and see what can be done for everyone's sake.

This isn't good enough for some dealers who want us to state a firm policy *now* , one that *they* like, and stick to it. They say they won't let their customers see AtariUser until we do. Sorry, but a premature policy is as potentially unfair as none at all.

We support the the vast majority who welcome our support. And the User Groups, too. And we'll continue to work on the problems. But in the mean time, you might look seriously at our home subscription offer, as a couple of dealers have pledged to campaign against and boycott any and all magazines that advertise discount hardware (jeez). What's next? Discount software, of course. Then maybe service? Finally, will they tell us not to talk about new products until the dealers have a chance to sell off the old ones?

Thanks, but no. AtariUser welcomes, in fact solicits all comments, but we will make our own decisions about our policies, on our own schedule. Responsibly. And we know the other publications are doing the same.

GENCON SUPER GAME SHOW

Atari is again attending GENCON, sponsored by TSR, the renowned leader of Dungeons and Dragons adventure gaming. Last year, more than 12,000 people attended the massive fest in Milwaukee's MECCA convention center. More are expected this year, and the MilAtari User Group in Milwaukee is helping to arrange and staff Atari's 2,000+ square foot area on the game floor. More than 50 ST machines will be set up for play, with 32 of them in a MIDI-MAZE ring. Last year, with something like 3,000 entry slots available throughout the show in the MIDI-ring multi-player shootemup, MilAtari SOLD all but 8 slots. Many more availabilities are planed this year.

Lynx machines will be featured well this year too, and the Atari portables are expected to draw more attention (and square feet of exposure) than the Nintendo and Sega offerings, which last year remained mostly on the smaller sale floor, and not on the more popular gaming areas.

The show is August 8-11. If you can, be there. —*John Nagy* ■

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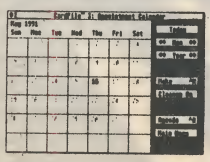

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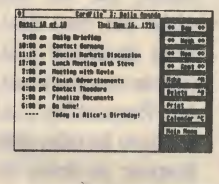

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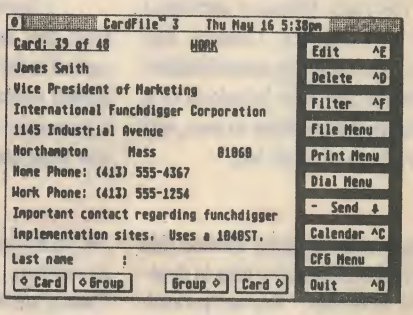

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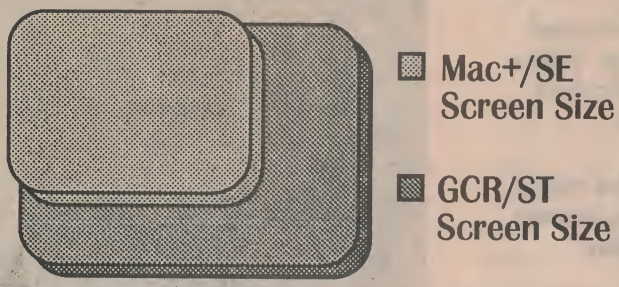

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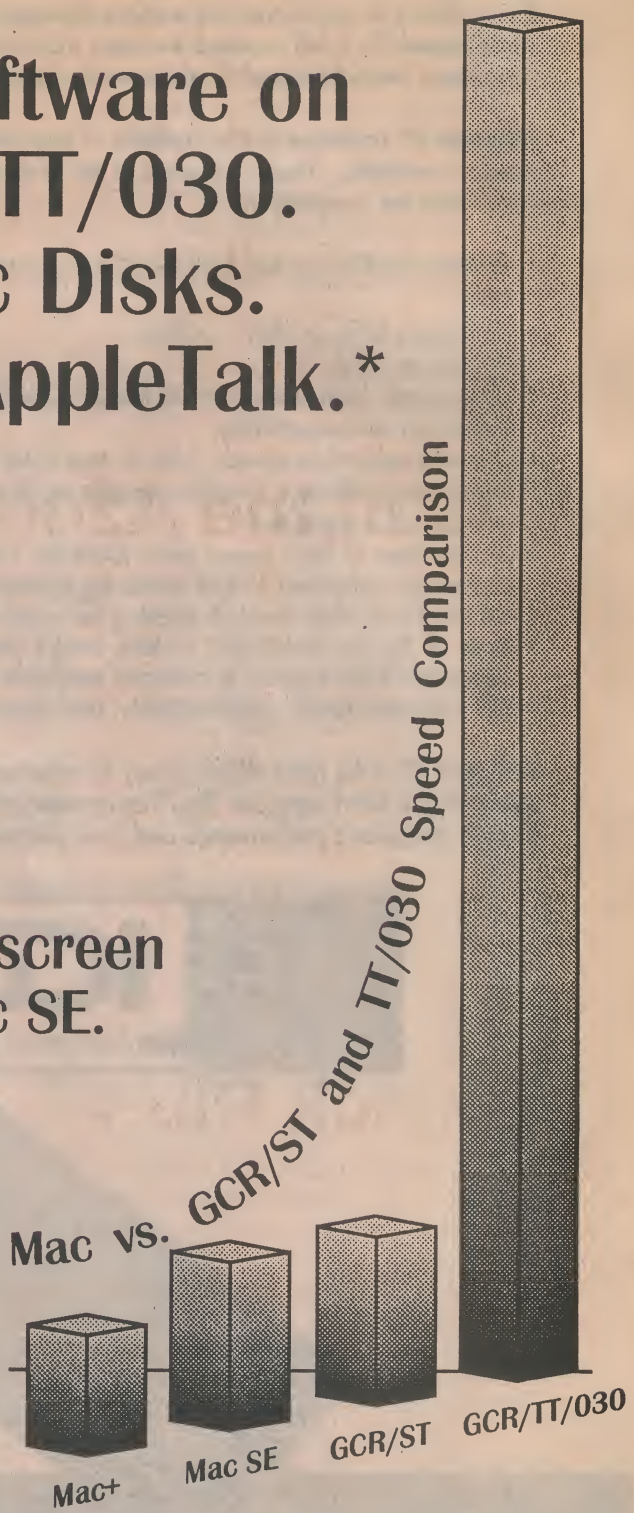

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Monty Python's Flying Circus

ST ■ "And now for something completely different..." If you know where this phrase comes from, then you must have this game. It is as irreverent as the TV show or the movies. For starters, there is no instruction manual. Instead you get the "Official Hungarian Phrase Book" complete with dance steps.

You'll wade through twenty-one pages of fun before you get to anything that resembles instructions. You'll learn about "Cheese: The Untold Truth," the BBC viewing guide, and The News in Brief.

The game is copy protected (you can't run it from a hard drive), but they have even managed to make that fun. To play the game, you have to be able to identify two of the cheeses that are displayed throughout the manual.

The game is your basic run, duck, jump, shoot and pick-up type of action, only with belly laughs. I have to quote from the Phrase Book here because you may not believe me: "A piece of brain is being held on each skill and fun level. The levels are all quite different in a skill and fun sort of way, but all of them have things in common. Good things like sausages, eggs, beans, spam (skill) and cheese (fun) and bad things like dead parrots." At first, all you can do is swim because you are dumber than a carp. As you find brain parts, you get more skills and become smarter.

You shoot at the bad guys with unlimited fish. Extra points are earned by shooting cheese. But don't shoot the Spam, collect them and they will be registered in the Spam Counter. Argue with the Minister for Pointless Arguments, and get more points the longer you keep the argument going.

Fun and silliness is the real attraction of Monty Python's Flying Circus, as the actual game play is little better than fair—but who cares? You'll be too busy laughing to be critical of the less than challenging game play. Requires 1 meg and color monitor. By Virgin Games, $39.95. The End, SPLAT! —*John King Tarpinian*

Curse of the Azure Bonds

ST ■ Curse of the Azure Bonds is the second adventure set in the Forgotten Realms series from SSI. While the first adventure as well as all subsequent adventures in this series are not currently planned for the ST market, this one is a real gem.

If you like the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (AD&D) game, you'll find that Curse of the Azure Bonds is an accurate representation pulled directly from AD&D, with TSR assisting in the development of this series. The box for this product leads you to drop it in the "computer adventure" category, but in reality it is a "computer role playing adventure" and much more exciting. Five "Azure Bonds" are imbedded in each of your six champions sword arms. As these bonds can control you, it is your quest to have them removed and regain some self-control.

Operation of the game can be done almost entirely with the mouse, but I have found that a combination of mouse and keyboard commands is most useful. While the instruction manual is quite large, it's nicely laid out and a useful reference. The game also comes with an "Adventurer's Journal" which has various stories and maps that will help you in your adventure. You're told which journal entry to read at specific points in the game when more detail is required.

The game is addicting and enjoyable. If a unique and highly detailed computer role playing adventure is your cup of tea, you can't go wrong with this game. Curse of the Azure Bonds requires a color monitor and at least 512K of RAM and a double sided disk drive. This package uses the code wheel copy protection technique, a minor pain at the beginning of the game, but more than offset by the convenience and speed of the ability to install and run from a hard drive. $59.95 from Strategic Simulations, Inc. —*Brian Eliassen*

Summer Fun

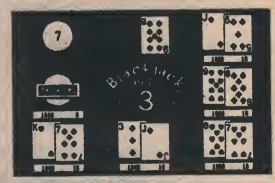
Blackjack Plus 3

ST ■ Do you love Las Vegas but hate to lose? Here's a pair of new games that may be just what the doctor, and your wallet, ordered. Blackjack Plus 3 comes in two similar editions—Basic and Advanced.

This is very realistic casino play! The graphics are nice and the prompts and play are intuitive. You have options to play with up to seven players, with from one to nine decks of cards, the depth of the shoe, how often the deck(s) are shuffled, etc. The house rules can be set to coincide with your favorite casino.

An unusual treat is that Blackjack Plus 3 can be played in either color or monochrome. The game does not use any disk based copy protection, meaning that you can load the program onto your hard drive. You do have to look up key words in the manual, but this is a fairly non-medicinal anti-piracy scheme.

The Advanced Version adds an excellent module that helps you learn how to count cards. It is programmable enough that you can setup any method of card counting you want, whether it be your own or a commercially promoted counting method. You can even test your strategies. By setting the player(s) in background mode, you can test 100 hands in eight seconds. This is a very quick and painless way to see if the odds are in your favor.



Blackjack Plus 3 Advanced retails at $89.95, and the Basic version is $39.95. Musicode offers a discount for direct order: Advanced for $49.95 and Basic for $23.95, including shipping and handling. You can also upgrade from the Basic Version to the Advanced version directly from them, too. Musicode, 5575 Baltimore Dr. #105-127, La Mesa, CA 91942, 619-469-7194.

If you want to hone your blackjack skills before you head off to the land of neon lights, I highly recommend this game. It is really better than any review can communicate. —*John King Tarpinian*

■ More RE:Views on page 17

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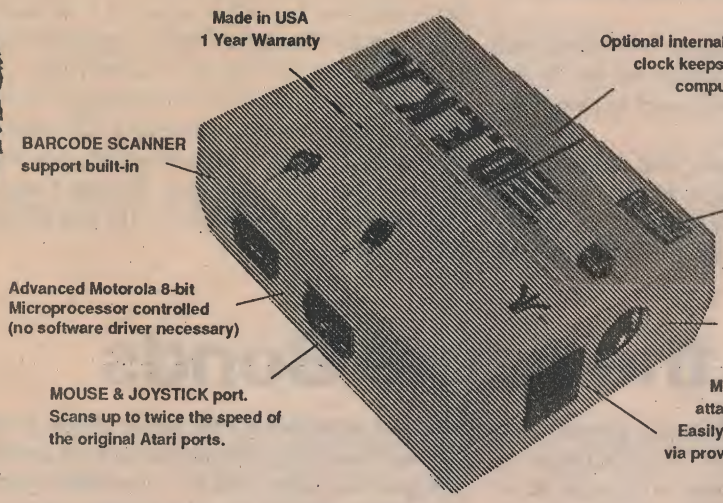

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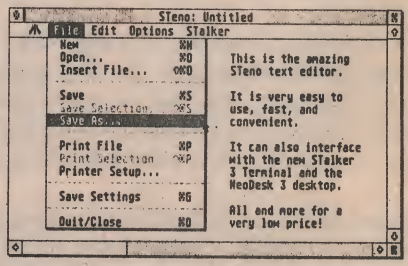

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The Secret of Monkey Island

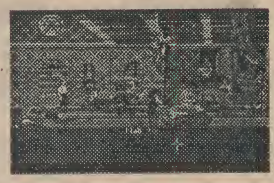
ST ■ The Secret of Monkey Island is a graphic adventure by Ron Gilbert. It requires 1 meg of RAM to run, and surprisingly supports both color and monochrome monitors. The game comes on four disks and can be run from a hard drive. The disks are not copy protected, but the protection scheme should give a chuckle. This game is a swashbuckling adventure—so how do you protect against piracy? Find a specified pirate up on a Dial-A-Pirate code wheel and then enter when the pirate was hanged. This is to be done with your tongue firmly planted in your cheek.

Monkey Island is not a "make a mistake and you die" type of adventure. You can die, but in more traditional ways than picking up the wrong object at the wrong time. This makes for less frustrating game play, removing a common reason I lose interest in a game.

Another nice feature for the less adept is that you don't have to guess what to ask a person you might meet. Choices are given to you. Your decision is to select the best answer. Believe me, some are better than others.

The object of the game is to accomplish three tasks to become a pirate. You must learn to fence, steal, and find the treasure. On the way you will have to fight everything from a sea gull and a pack of guard dogs to a troll and the ghost of a pirate.

Monkey Island is a pleasant game with enough surprises and challenges for most players, although the "choose an option" interface may bore hardened adventurers. Its best feature is that Monkey Island is friendly enough that beginners and occasional adventurers will enjoy the game, too. LucasFilm Games, $59.95. —*John King Tarpinian*



Fidelity Chess Challenge

Lynx ■ Portable video game players can not live on action-arcade titles alone. Filling a void in the Lynx product line, Telegames Inc. has released Fidelity Ulitmate Chess Challenge for the Atari Lynx. There is not much to be said; this is good Western chess, following all the standard rules for the game.

Fidelitylets one or two players play chess with a single Lynx. The computer opponent offers 17 levels of difficulty and an "ultimate" level, using unlimited time and searching. You can ask the computer for hints, force it to make an immediately move, and take back moves (up to 100). The board offers a 2D or 3D board, and game sounds, messages, and other features can be toggled during a game. The entire current game is logged in standard "B2-E5" chess notation, and can be reviewed, along with the players' scores, based on the pieces remaining.

The Lynx plays a very respectable and aggressive game. For a test, I pitted Fidelity Chess against the Atari ST version of Chess Battle. Although the Lynx generally took longer to make decisions, it ultimately checked and mated the ST in 23 moves. With "ultimate" mode, Fidelity Chess may be almost impossible to defeat.

Sadly, control response is the most sluggish I've ever seen in a Lynx game. And not all features are available directly from the options screen, such as taking back a move. The worst flaw in Fidelity Chess , though, is the lack of a "board set-up" feature. Essentially, you must either finish a game at one sitting, or log all the moves to manually re-play and continue a game at a later time.

Graphics and sound in Fidelity Chess are functional, but nothing more. Aside from a musical ditty at the title page, the only sounds are the chimes played when a piece is moved or a message is shown.

The Fedility Ultimate Chess Challange plays a strong, challenging game, and I recommend it. Telegames Inc., for the Atari Lynx, $39.95. —*Robert Jung*

Lemmings!

ST ■ Lemmings is one of those "gotta have" games, very different from anything else, and of course, addictive.

In Lemmings, you're in charge of hoards of animated, green, mindless lemmings in a modified platform game. It's your sole function to direct them to goals while saving enough of them to advance to the next level. You can command individual lemmings to climb, dig, block, etc., and their actions, in turn, affect the other lemmings, who follow like... lemmings. One of the most bizzare commands is the "nuke," which sets up a five second countdown timer—then all the lemmings explode. (This is the *"I think I should quit since I don't know what I am doing"* command.) Levels are Fun, Tricky, Taxing, and Mayhem. Each of these categories has 30 levels, so you'll be very busy. While a save game feature would be nice, it's not really necessary since you are given a new 10 digit code word for each level you complete.

This one is fun to watch, with fast screens and full animation. The one fault I found was the monotonous music. Fortunately, there is a "sound F/X only" command, which enhances the sounds of the various effects you place upon the lemmings, as well as easing your already frazzled nerves.

Lemmings can be played with one or two players. It requires a color monitor, 512K of RAM, and is copy protected. Lemmings can't be installed on a hard drive, but the disk access between levels is very fast. $49.95, written by DMA Design and being distributed by Psygnosis. —*Brian Eliassen* ■

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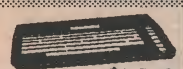

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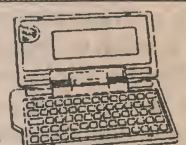

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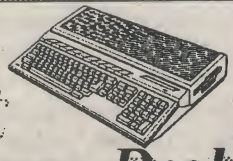

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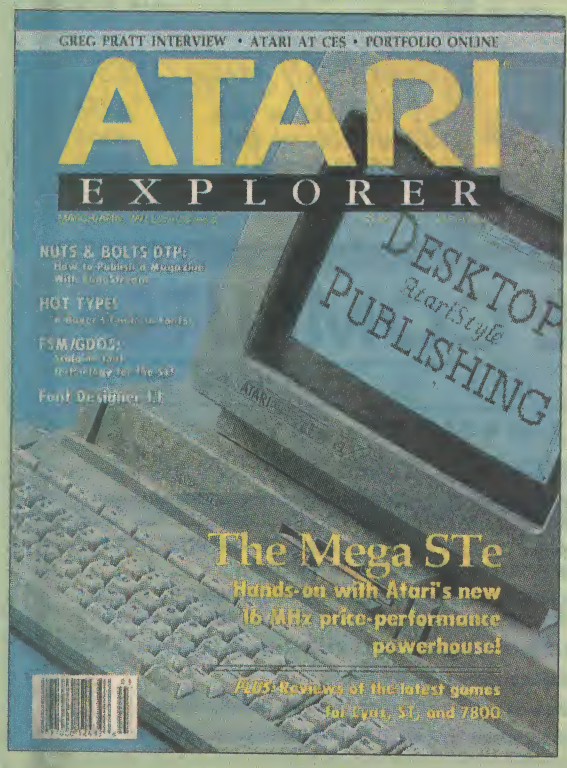
Summertime READS

ATARILAND STYLE

EDITOR'S NOTE AtariUser originally planned to include a monthly guide to the contents of the major Atari support magazines. However, the only magazine that was willing to cooperate was STart, and of course, they are now history. So, we commissioned Andy Eddy, a magazine professional with Atari experience, to do an objective look at Atari publications. We promised a free hand, and he shared his opinions frankly. We didn't think it was quite right to include a review of AtariUser with these, so make up your own!

Flashback alert! Flashback alert! I have to be honest: When the editors of AtariUser approached me about doing an article on Atari-related publications, I was interested in the concept. After all, I cut my writing teeth doing reviews and articles for A.N.A.L.O.G., ST-Log, Antic, Compute!, Compute! ST and Atari Explorer.

The box I was given was filled with different periodicals, all pertaining to the current market of Atari products. However, gone were most of the mags I worked for—A.N.A.L.O.G., ST-Log, Antic, Compute! ST, and now even STart are all pushing up daisies; Compute! changed hands and look when purchased by General Media (publishers of Omni and Penthouse); and ST World and Atari Explorer each took recent sabbaticals.



I should have been prepared because the Atari world was always volatile, but looking through this Pandora's box of publications brought back many memories. And smiles. And agonies. Hey, I was there when the decision was made to kill the "Logs," and after nearly a decade of those mags, it was hard to see 'em go. Yet, it's a necessary fear in the publishing world where most magazines fail and the average success story lasts four years.

I know, I know. You're saying, "Take this tissue, Eddy, and move on. Please?" Sorry. Enough whining. (Sniff.) On to the issues (pun intended) at hand.

Atari Explorer

on the Eddyometer

29-05 Broadway Astoria, NY 11106 (718) 545-2900 ■ Frequency: Bimonthly ■ Issue Reviewed: March/April ■ 1991 Editorial Slant: Cautious company line.

Summary—After a hiatus, Atari Explorer (AE) is back on the shelves again. The main "problem" is that the magazine is a collaboration between the editors and Atari itself, which can affect the objectivity of the publication. This, in fact, is one of the reasons for the interrupted service of AE—the editorial team of David Ahl and Betsy Staples was "released" after content disagreements with Atari. However, even a company mouthpiece can impart a lot of information to its readers about the products it covers, even if a grain of salt has to be given to its bias.

Look and Feel—AE is a pretty good looking magazine, and the art director, Peter Kelley, explains the transition from the "old" AE in an article in the issue reviewed. Certainly, one of the biggest boosts to the readership is how they are using Atari computers and software to construct the magazine using DTP.

The quality of this new technology is reflected in the layout, which is clean and functional; it's not hard to follow from page to page. The quality of the materials is good, too, using glossy paper that is comfortable to read and holds the ink without bleeding text and images. But a major mag like AE could benefit from more color.

Lastly, two complaints: First, I felt that most of the graphics that did appear on the pages of AE were a bit too dark. Second, in the article on fonts—which went nearly 13 pages—I felt that too much room was taken up by demonstrations of various fonts in too large a point size. If the font demos were scaled down, it's possible that another article could have been put in.

Writing and Editing—A primary function of an editor is to make the magazine flow smoothly. Some magazine editors make their "contributions" far too obtrusive, annoying the reader and pulling them away from the material. AE's editorial crew does a good job of staying in the background, letting the material speak for itself. Again, the content is clean and understandable.

On the other hand, one of the highlights of any magazine is the people that get together to compose their personal opinions into a magazine. Especially in a product-specific magazine, it's nice to read articles by a particular writer from issue to issue, and see their style come through. Unfortunately, the use of bylines in AE is on-again, off-again. Bylines give a magazine personality, and the lack of bylines—particularly on reviews, where personal opinions are strong—is disappointing.

Utility—If there is one thing a company-overseen magazine can provide, it's utility. If you want information on a new product, the company mouthpiece should be the one to turn to. Sadly, this has been a problem with AE in the past, as Atari has kept the wraps on products until the last minute. This not only frustrates the editors, but it makes them look bad also.

It appears that Atari is taking a better interest in passing info to the reader through AE, mixing articles on desktop publishing (DTP), games, Atari at CES and COMDEX and the STe as well as an interview with Greg Pratt (Atari's General Manager), among others. Also, all aspects of the Atari world are represented, with reviews and articles on the Lynx, ST and 7800 and Portfolio. Quite a mixture.

A big complaint, though, is how much space is devoted to what could be considered esoteric material. Though DTP is gaining popularity with home-computer users, it still doesn't account for a majority of computer use. However, in one issue, AE devoted about 25 of its 80 pages—about 31%—to DTP and fonts. This isn't what I would consider the best tact for a general-interest computer magazine, especially a bimonthly. Worse, the production schedule of AE this year has been spotty enough to qualify as a tri-monthly.

Overall Rating—Many of the complaints I had were issue-specific, and shouldn't be as much of an issue from month to month (or, really, bimonth to bimonth). Atari's influence will hopefully help AE get more breaking product news out. More often.

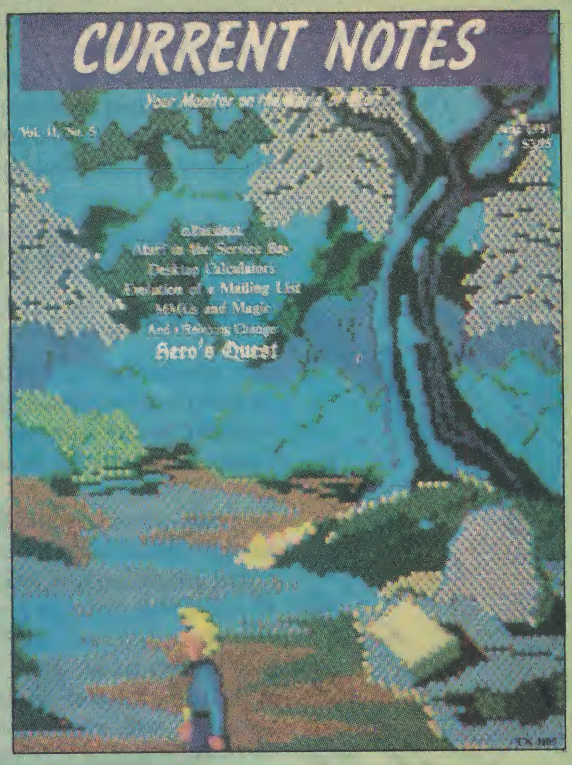
Current Notes

★★★★½

122 North Johnson Road Sterling, VA 22170 (703) 450-4761 ■ Frequency: Monthly, except for January and August ■ Issues Reviewed: Dec. 1990, June 1991 ■ Editorial Slant: The "everyman's" Atari magazine.

Summary—Rivaling many of the nationally distributed Atari magazines, Current Notes (CN) is been in production for a while, and features one of the best mixes of material you can find. It features page after page of solid editorial.

Look and Feel—CN is a perfect example of traditional magazine layout—for the most part, three columns of text with a smattering of graphics—that is comfortable and easy to read. It doesn't overwhelm the reader with lots of eye-catching images or too many fonts. It simply gets out the information without a lot of fanfare.



Though CN's text is laser output, as told by its rough-edged characters, it is fairly clean and not that annoying. Sadly, CN also doesn't offer any color pages for its price ($27 for 10 issues), but, again, the Atari market's flakiness (sorry, kids) prevents extravagant spending in the production department. To its credit, CN has been around a long time by being careful and down-to-basics. The June issue featured perhaps the first full color cover ever on CN.

Writing and Editing—One of the keys to a magazine is an identity. Not only does CN have a lot of independent articles, but also features a strong share of columns—particularly David Small (hacker extraordinaire from Gadgets by Small) and his views on the Atari community. Especially nice for Atari veterans is Ben Poehland's "8-Bit Alchemist" column.

The editing is also good, though there are some minor annoyances, such as the use of double-hyphens instead of an "em" dash. Otherwise, CN editors do their jobs without drawing too much attention to themselves.

Utility—What can I say? A CN I looked at had COMDEX coverage, an article on tax deductions for home computers, other product announcements, product reviews (commercial utilities and games, as well as shareware titles) and suggestions for Atari-related Christmas gifts, among others. This kind of blend is exactly what the reader wants, and what a product-specific publication should deliver. It's right there in black and white, literally.

And the amount of advertising also is a testament to CN functionality. The issue reviewed for this article has the most advertising of any of the other American magazines. Cost of advertising is one thing, but readership

is another. It's my guess that CN is grabbing advertisers due to its reader appreciation.

Overall Rating—Current Notes is, simply put, a magazine by Atari users for all Atari users, which is reflected in its editorial package. It could use some movement into the modern age of publishing, but it's not a requirement.

Atari Interface

3487 Braeburn Circle Ann Arbor, MI 48108 (313) 973-8825 ■ Frequency: Monthly ■ Issues Reviewed: February, March, April/May 1991 ■ Editorial Slant: Overall yet lightweight coverage.

Summary—Atari Interface Magazine (AIM) bills itself as "a monthly publication that also serves as an official newsletter of several independent Atari user groups." Several? It lists over 60 participating Atari user groups.

Look and Feel—AIM's an attractive package, from its color cover to its basic layout. (The cover of the March issue, created on the TT, looks like a painting.) It gets its information across quite well, without many hitches along the way.

The production of the magazine is good, too. It's printed on good paper, and the typography is clean—showing that the ability of the ST in DTP is adequate.

Writing and Editing—The articles in AIM are friendly, for the most part informative (more on this in a second) and easy reading. And, similarly, the editing doesn't impose on the writers' musings.

One other thing that jumped out at me was an article called "Public Domain, It Doesn't Have to be Sold to be Good!" While the article starts off describing the benefits of PD software, it turns into an AIM Monthly Disk pitch. Editorial should be clear of advertising, and a magazine must be careful...

Utility—While issues of AIM I looked at are over 50 pages of editorial material and advertising, I came away feeling like I was missing something—there didn't seem to be enough "information" there. For example, the February issue had about 20 pages of ads out of the 55 pages. Add to that about a dozen pages of club news (mainly listings of when the clubs meet and where, which would be best run on an occasional basis, as opposed to every month). And the table of contents spans two pages, including the 60-plus clubs that contribute. This really doesn't leave much for the reader to sink their teeth into.

Also, some of the editorial material seemed to be, as described in the Atari Explorer review, somewhat limited in its focus. For instance, the February issue included a 1-1/2-page "review" of Vampire Empire, an aged ST game, which doesn't so much review the game as describe it. In that same issue, there is also a long article comparing two MIDI keyboards. Given the limited editorial space in AIM, I think it could have offered a better mix of material to suit the reader.

In all fairness, the March issue seems to be a little better balanced with articles on the STe, the issue of Byte magazine not covering Atari products in its DTP overview, a piracy test and an article on London's 16-bit Computer Faire, among others. It still seemed to be a tad "thin."

Overall Rating—Though AIM is pleasing to read, I can't overlook the fact that there just doesn't seem to be enough to dig into. Perhaps this will change in future issues, and the foundation is there if it does.

PSAN

P.O. Box 110576 Tacoma, WA 98411-0576 (206) 566-1703 (Jim Chapman, coordinator) ■ Frequency: Monthly ■ Issues Reviewed: February, March/April 1991 ■ Editorial Slant: Potpourri.

Summary—Self-described, the Puget Sound Atari News is the newsletter of the "participating non-profit Atari computer users groups. The contents of PSAN are a compilation of club news, hobby and industry news and articles about Atari computers and supporting software and hardware."

Look and Feel—Being a newsletter, PSAN is understandably rougher in its appearance, and more basic in its layout. This doesn't hinder its ability to pass on information, and the publication's staff does a good job of putting it together. Also, the magazine is created using Atari computers and related software.

On the critical side, some of the articles were composed at an uncomfortably small point size. At the same time, there were some filler cartoons unrelated to computers that could have been lifted for a better, easier-to-read layout. The editor could also drop a story in favor of a cleaner magazine.

But the bottom line is that the PSAN is a nice-looking package considering that it's not a professionally created magazine (like Atari Explorer), and is fairly comfortable and clean for a laser-printed publication.

Writing and Editing—Much of the writing comes from other sources, such as GEnie and other club publications, so some leniency needs to be given for consistency of writing and editing. The expected quantity of typos and grammatical errors are found, however they don't diminish from the information that PSAN passes on.

PSAN also builds itself up by adding some supplements, such as Z*Net ("The International Atari Newsletter") and a Club News section.

Utility—Newsletters not only try to provide reviews and news within the world the club was formed to partake in, but also cover the club news itself. PSAN is no different, and does the job well. In the issues looked at, there were articles and reviews on such subjects as database programs, color printing, hardware projects and program reviews—there was even a review of the same game by two different people for better perspective. PSAN also includes the 8-bit user, devoting space to that often-neglected community.

Overall Rating—Again, I don't want it to appear as a strong criticism, but the PSAN is a newsletter in magazine format, and it suffers from some minor attendant problems. However, its strength is that it offers something for everyone.

ST Informer

280 Peach Street Merlin, OR 97532 (503) 476-0071 ■ Frequency: Monthly ■ Issues Reviewed: March, April 1991 ■ Editorial Slant: Wide and agressive.

Summary—It's easy to spot ST Informer because it's the only newspaper-style ST publication that's out. And its cover page

is newspaper-like also, featuring some newsier items like press releases and reports.

Look and Feel—ST Informer is a really nice presentation of material, and jams a lot of information into its pages. Though it offers almost no color to speak of, its four-column layout is smooth to follow articles through. It appears that ST Informer keeps the same style from month to month, placing new-product announcements and a feature on the front page, columns near the front, etc. This makes the reader feel at home with each issue, much like you'd feel driving the roads of your home town.

Writing and Editing—The content of ST Informer is all top drawer, and the editors make sure there is a good quantity of material for everyone, as well as the specialty stuff. For instance, the April 1991 issue contained articles on new Atari products in the works, the new NeoDesk 3.02, the second part of a RAM upgrade article, as well as a study of electrostatic discharge and its effect on computers, in addition to many reviews of ST products.

It also appears that the editorial staff has a idea of what they are doing. The material is showcased well and grammatically correct.

Utility—Even though there is a fair amount of advertising in ST Informer, the staff still seems to put a load of stuff in there. Each issue is chock full of reviews, product announcements, tutorials and columns, among others. The columns in particular cover most of the regular needs of the reader: game reviews, new products of interest, a rumor column and a Q&A help section. The latter two are quite helpful—the rumor column gives the readers a fill of hot tidbits (for instance, did you know that a STacy was used on-stage at a Sting concert), potential stories and insight, while "The Help Key" provides some basic ST-specific techniques and answers questions that most users don't have anyone handy to answer.

It's apparent that ST Informer can fill one other gap that most other publications can't: timeliness. It would appear that ST Informer has almost no lead time (the time it takes for a magazine to get into readers' hands after it is completed) because the April '91 issue featured a reader letter commenting on a review in the March '91 issue. What this means is that ST Informer is more like a newspaper because the editors can place stories into it at the last minute.

Overall Rating—ST Informer has something for everyone, and presents special-interest material in a way that can draw in those readers who may not normally raise their eyelids. This is a well-produced publication.

ST World

2463 Latona Court NE Salem, OR 97303 (503) 393-9688 ■ Frequency: Monthly? ■ Issue Reviewed: April 1991 ■ Editorial Slant: Too early to tell.

Summary—After a hiatus with a strange story behind it, ST World seems to be back with new management, though there is some doubt that it has returned to a regular monthly schedule.

Look and Feel—ST World is mainly a black-and-white publication, printed on newsprint—some of the ink will end up on your hands after a good read-through. It also employs a fairly large point size, which not only makes it easy to read (like a kid's book), but also lets each article take up more space, thus filling the magazine quicker.

Otherwise, the layout is very simple: three-column layout for most of the magazine, switching to two-column for a feature article. The magazine employs very few graphics, but offers an "identity" by showing pictures of its columnists next to their work.

Writing and Editing—This is a problem area, one that the editors should address in future issues. For instance, ST World uses the straight quote marks that signal a less-than-professional look. Also quirky is the schizophrenic mix of punctuation inside quotes in some articles, while being placed outside quotes in others. This leads me to believe that the editors are leaving it up to the writers, again showing editing to be below standard. The writing could also use some tweaking, but a few of the articles show great promise.

One thing that really bothered me was the Errata section. While error gremlins always manage to creep into even the best publications, ST World (with a long history of typos and layout errors) seems to dwell too much on the mistakes of the previous issue. Apparently, the titles on four articles were switched, which is bad enough on the surface, but becomes worse when too much attention is paid to it. As a reader, I'm not too concerned with the mechanics of why a mistake happened. But as an editor, on the other hand, I can't subscribe to the explanation that these were flukes—even the most difficult, four-color magazines have room to check proof pages for mistakes, particularly those in headlines. 'Nuff said.

Utility—Unfortunately, this department didn't help my view of ST World. While there are some attractive articles in the issue I reviewed, there are also some pieces that are well-written but hit a very small audience. How many of you are interested in a super-techie article called "V.32, the CCITT and the Tale of the 9600 Baud Modem"? How about an article on "Clients and Servers"? I'm not saying that technical articles don't have their place in general-interest magazines, but this stuff belongs in Byte or InfoWorld more than an Atari magazine, in my view. A magazine that wants to gain subscribers can't overestimate its market.

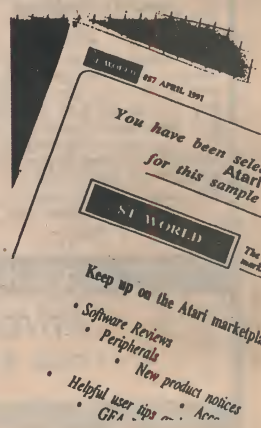
This is not to say that ST World is empty of helpful or well-directed writings. It features a good mix of game reviews (both for Lynx and ST), a smattering of press releases and a preview section, among the previously mentioned articles. A better mix of game coverage, "serious" hardware/software reviews and other articles of interest is needed.

Overall Rating—Suffice it to say that I wasn't that pleased with the "new" ST World. It would be good to see more issues; I only had one to work with, and couldn't prove the rumors of it being monthly.

▼ HEY, WHAT ABOUT THE "ONLINE" MAGAZINES..?
These are "free," electronically transferred, available on CompuServe, GEnie, Delphi, F-Net, UseNet, and countless private bulletin boards.

ST Report

Post Office Box 6672 Jacksonville, Florida 32205-6672 (904) 783-3319 ■ Frequency: Weekly ■ Issues Reviewe: May 24, May 31, June 7, 1991 ■ Editorial Slant—"A Current Affair" Meets the ST.



■ Continued on page 25

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#1175 - MidiMaze II (DBL)
#1180 - Hac Man 2 - Professional quality Pac Man Clone. (Color/1 Meg RAM/DBL)
#1202 - Hero *Vapid's Keep* Demo (Color Only)
#1222 - MORIA - Single player dungeon simulation (1 Meg RAM/DBL)

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#512 - Explicit Hints and Character Set on the leve above Chaos with the best equipment selection.
#590 - Game Disk Organizer
Saved game file of characters with a Firestaff weapon.
#720 - Maps for Levels 8-14

For Chaos Strikes Back

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#899 - Walk thru of opening level. Dragon Lair portraits. 5 Fantasy and 3 Sci Fi character portraits. Prison List. Spells and Potions List and more!
#997/998 - Maps for Levels 5 & 3
#1015 - *Cartographer Demo*
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Utilities

#399 - Degas/Degas Elite Printer Drivers
#400/800 - 3 1/2" Disk Labeling Programs
#438 - Vanterm V3.0 - Shareware Terminal
#443 - Intersect RAM Baby, Amortization
#514 - Monochrome Emulator V3.0 - Run Mono programs on Color monitors
#688/866 - H.P. Deskjet/Laserjet Utilities
#768/938/1165 - NeoDesk Icons
#801 - *Label Printing Programs*
Cassette Label Maker, Label and Envelope Printer and more.
#888 - *Atari ST Subjects* (Book) Programs
#938 - NeoDesk Icons, Recoverable Trashcan V1.2
Quick NeoDesk INF Loader, NeoDesk Canvas
#940/941 - **LaserBrain V1.31** - Epson Emulator for Atari SLM804 Laser Printer. (Mono Only/DBL)
Additional Fonts on #1001-1003
#950 - **24 Pin Printer Emulator** - Written for printers without a letter quality mode.
Deskjet Disk Labeling Program
Menu Master - Set up menus to auto load programs on your own disks.
#951 - DC Show It V1.1, Head Start V1.1, Little Green Item Selector V1.6C
#952 - Address Labeler V2.0 - Create, Print and Store address labels
#988 - Fast Copy III, NX-1000 Set Up
H.P. Deskjet Print Utility V1.4
#991 - Label Printing for H.P. Deskjet & Avery 5260 Labels, Desktop Formatter, Disk Sector Edit.
#1008 - **ICONDESK** - Set up different looking icons for different file types. 79 icons & editor included. (Mono required to use editor)
#1009 - Diamond Back II w/Cache Demo
#1038/1039 - DC Desktop Icons
#1041 - ST Data Handler V3.0 - Simple, mouse driven data base program.
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#758/759/994 - Calamus Fonts
#870 - ***PageStream Fonts***
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#895 - PageStream V1.8 Demo (DBL)
#935 - *Desktop Publishing Utilities*
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Demos from Wiz Works
Fontverter Demo - Convert fonts between PageStream and Calamus
PageStream File to 300 DPI .IMG conversion
#1028 - ***PageStream Font Editor V0.8***
Now you can edit and touch up those PageStream Fonts. 20 page manual included on disk. Also included: Improved Postscript Screen Fonts: Book, Chancery, New Century Schoolbook, Palatino, Times
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#1150 - ***Calamus Fonts***
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#1153 - ***Calamus Fonts***
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#1179 - ***Calamus Fonts***
Complete Glib font from FontAbility
#1190 - ***Calamus Fonts***
Micron, Tiempo, Swiss Medium, Leecaps, Medici, Windzor, Zalescap
#1223 - ***Calamus Fonts***
Chicago, Comet, Cursive, Gaudy Cond, Gallia, Gillies, Goudy, Legend, Old English

Applications

#810/811 - SHEET V2.5P - Shareware Spreadsheet.
#965 - Checkbook V1.09, Almanac (Color)
#989 - Paperless Accountant
#999 - **ST Writer V3.8** - Simple easy to use word processor with extensive documentation on disk. H.P. DeskJet Driver included.
Spell V2.8 - Spelling Checker (No words)
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#1131 - Deluxe Paint Demo
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Graphics design program patterned after a magnetic set. For ages 2-8
#552 - *Kid Shapes Plus*
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#667 - *Benjamin's ABC's*
Teaches young children the letters of the alphabet with digitized speech. (DBL)
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Kid Color - Learning game for 3-7 year olds Uses the mouse to point to boxes with a certain color.
Kid Story V1.4 - A silly version of the Little Red Riding Hood. Allows children to create a story.
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#982 - Body Shop: Human Anatomy Tutor

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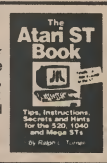

Atari ST Subjects

Topics covered include: Hard Drives, Running IBM Software, Disk Structure, File Recovery, Connecting a 5 1/4" Disk Drive, Assemblying your own Hard Drive, Sector & File Editing, Binary/Hex/Decimal Codes, ASCII File Problems, Escape Codes and much more!

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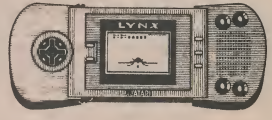

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■ Continued from page 23

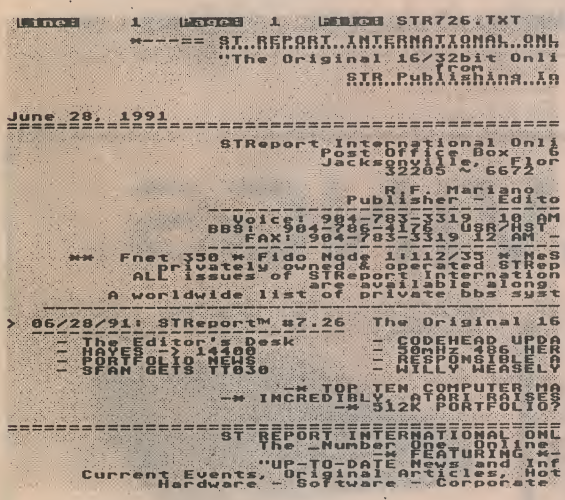
Summary—One "publication" takes the prize as the National Enquirer of the ST world, and that's the electronic ST Report. Though over time it has been proven to be a rumor monger, it has also been counted on by many each week for insight and no-holds-barred reporting. What the heck is ten minutes of downloading worth to you?

Look and Feel—Well, the look is what you make it. After all, ST Report is a text file, so looks aren't really under consideration. But its "flow," how the magazines moves from article to article and the choice of articles in each issue is smooth enough. ST Report also features its share of regular columns that cover all subjects.

Writing and Editing—Room has to be given to a weekly publication for some sloppiness. ST Report does a good enough job of making the articles readable, though there are some of the traditional mistakes in punctuation, grammar and spelling.

Another benefit about ST Report is the fact that there isn't much advertising in it, though there are ads just the same. However, advertisements for CompuServe, Delphi and GEnie help more people get into a position of downloading ST Report—and getting involved with online activities—so it's easy to overlook. Besides, the best thing about an electronic publication is the reader's ability to skip ahead if an article or advertisement annoys.

Utility—Wait a minute. Isn't the name of this publication ST Report? Why, then, are there extensive articles on other



PCs ("CPU Report") and the Macintosh ("Mac Report")? It's certainly a change from when I used to read ST Report regularly, and I'm not sure it's appropriate. However, when I used to read it regularly, it was ST specific—and about 50K in size. Now the ST Report files fill about 120K each, so I guess the readers can handle the extraneous non-ST filler. It's up to them to determine whether other industry news is required reading—even though I find it to be inappropriate for a magazine named ST Report. Yet, the articles are in-depth, particularly the "CPU Report", which is packed with technical insights and views on the industry.

On the ST side, there are some helpful sections, such as the "A Little of This, A Little of That" column, which singles out some of the important threads on the online services. This not only gives readers who aren't online cruisers a view of what type of action takes place there, but also answers some of the questions of the day, like what the status of GCR and System 7-compatibility is and aging troubles with particular hard drives. If only the rest of the "magazine" was more beneficial.

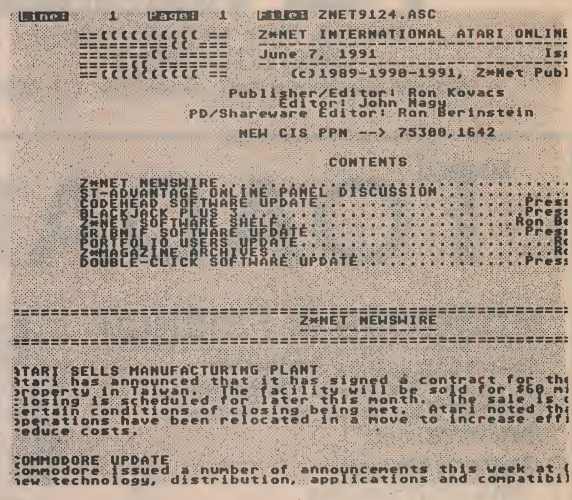
Finally , the editor, Ralph Mariano, is one of Atari's biggest fans—and detractors. He is brutally honest about when Atari messes up, perhaps to a fault, which is something of a wake-up call for the company at times. Though the readers get a benefit out of his rantings, they often go overboard, and have at times made him look like he is trying to create headlines. Again, the National Enquirer provides an apt comparison.

Overall Rating—If you can get by the snooty, smarmy rumor-slinging theatrics, the "I know something you don't know" reporting (which attempts to bring people back week after week like a soap opera) and the non-ST text, ST Report isn't really that bad for what it tries to accomplish. And it's pretty painless to download or have copied from another ST user.

Z*Net

P.O. Box 59 Middlesex, NJ 08846 (908) 968-2024 ■ Frequency: Weekly ■ Issue Reviewed: May 17, May 24, 1991 ■ Editorial Slant—All the News That Fits.

Summary—Ron Kovacs started ST Report as an offshoot of his ZMAGAZINE, and then...well, it's not important. After too much bad blood, Ron abandoned ST Report to Ralph Mariano, and now does Z*Net. It does its best to stick to reporting, both the visible and on the behind the scenes stuff.



Look and Feel—Again, as with ST Report, Z*Net's layout is nothing more than what you get when you load the file in your text editor of choice. Hey, you can make it two or three columns if you want, but its the content that matters.

The "Feel" of Z*Net is comfortable, the kind of vision you get by peering in on the evening news on TV. Z*Net tries to keep the reader informed of what the happenings are in the Atari community, without too much fluff or non-specific reportage. In comparison to ST Report, Z*Net also has its share of columns, though much better focused to the Atari world. And no advertising at all.

Writing and Editing—The columns we just spoke of are nicely written and, again, well focused. For example, the "Z*Net Software Shelf" by Ron Berinstein is a regular porthole to the new software appearing for the ST owner. Not only does this column offer a listing of new products and what they can be expected to do, but it also leads in the body of the article with some humorous and friendly—okay, sometimes eccentric—chatter. As mentioned before, this adds personality and freshness to a publication. Z*Net also has a nice mix of technical and non-technical coverage.

The editing is subject to the usual breaks in consistency, but Z*Net also features a good amount of reprinting—the is-

■ Continued on page 27

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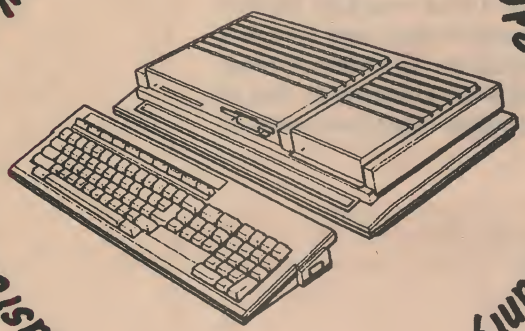

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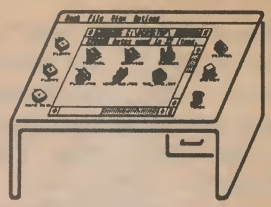

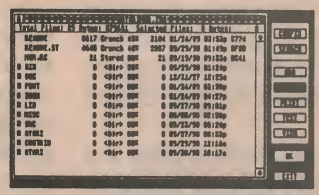

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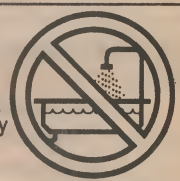

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■ Continued from page 25

sues I looked at included transcripts of online conferences and reprints of features from AtariUser—so it is pretty clean grammatically.

Utility—The fact that material is reprinted from other sources makes Z*Net's utility rating suffer somewhat, although most conference transcripts are mercifully condensed by the Z*Net editors.

An important issue, though, is that Z*Net features almost entirely Atari-related news, with the exception of the "Z*Net Newswire," which is industry-wide coverage, though a lot less intense or technically oriented than ST Report. (It, however, turned my head to see news stories in the May 17, 1991, issue on the death of John Maher, publisher of Down Beat magazine, the retirement of Harry Reasoner from the 60 Minutes TV show and the recent changes in Zenith computer prices. Hmmm, must've been a slow Atari-news week.)

A major benefit is that 95% of Z*Net is solid Atari coverage, and the issues generally were less than 50% the size of the similar ST Report, clicking in at about 55K in size.

Overall Rating—Most of Z*Net is meaty Atari reporting, something that makes it a big draw for Atari-computer owners. It doesn't take much time out of your week to download and scan through it. and you'll probably walk away with a few tidbits of knowledge that will help you be a more-informed user.

▼ OTHER GOODIES

That about covers the regular periodicals, both print and electronic. Certainly the cost wouldn't preclude you from getting a hold of a few to receive the varied benefit that some of these publications offer. And, needless to say, one man's ceiling may be another man's floor. For that reason, you should look into the content of the magazines I covered here to see if you get something out of them that I didn't—or even simply disagree with me.

Finally, there are many European Atari coverage magazines being imported with varied regularity. When reading foreign mags, understand that the ST is treated differently in other parts of the world, and may feature products not available or usable in North America. Also keep in mind that the cover prices only indicate the price in their respective countries; import costs may not enter into the equation. Check with your local Atari store or contact the publishers directly for more information on how you can get a copy. A pair of British magazines and one German magazine were in my grab-bag...

■ *ST Format*, The Old Barn Somerset, Somerset, England TA11 7PY0458 74011. Monthly, in English.
■ *Atari ST User*, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, England SK10 4NP0625 878888. Monthly, in English.
■ *Atari PD Journal*, HolbeinstraBe 606000, Frankfurt am Main 70, Germany 06151 56057-8. Monthly, all in German.

Happy reading! —*Andy Eddy* ■

▲ **Andy Eddy**, a long-time Atari journalist, is currently Executive Editor for VideoGames & Computer Entertainment and TurboPlay magazines. He can be reached on Delphi as VIDGAMES (where he is sysop for the World of Video Games SIG), CompuServe at 70007,3554 or GEnie at VIDGAME.

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■ Personal Subscriptions Please see page 6.

LYNX ALERT ■ Game Release Schedule: August: Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure, Lynx Casino, Grid Runner, NFL Football, Rolling Thunder, Scrapyard Dog Plus, Tournament Cyberball 2072, Turbo Sub, Viking Child, World Class Soccer, Xybots. September: Golf Challenger, Hard Drivin', Toki, Baseball. October: BasketBrawl, Hockey, STun Runner, Ishido, Cabal. November: Checkered Flag, GeoDuel, Dirty Larry. Early '92: Hydra, Pit Fighter, Vindicators, Taxi ■

New hot Lynx & games shown off at CES

Atari used the entire 11th floor at a hotel to show off the new Lynx model (which will be making its appearance in August) and the new games, rather than take a floor booth at the June Consumer Electronics Show.

First looks at some of the hot new titles... Ninja Gaiden: An excellent translation of the martial arts coin-op. Baseball Heroes: A baseball simulation that is still being worked on but is off to a good start. Hockey: A very quick hockey simulation that even includes a beat'em up fight sequence. Scrapyard Dog: A side scrolling action-adventure that oozes with payability and gorgeous background graphics. APB: An arcade police car driving game with tons of digitized voices. Turbo Sub: An inside the cockpit shoot'em up set aboard a flying-diving vehicle with some of the best looking Lynx graphics yet. Hard Drivin': The 3D polygon arcade smash has translated very well to the Lynx and has even kept the crash replays. Kung Food: A martial arts food game? You control a green fellow who battles very detailed cartoonish vegetable villains (the big carrots look like they have real attitudes). Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventures: A great 1 or 2 player overhead adventure through various time zones—adventure lovers will really dig it. Dirty Larry: A scrolling fighting/shooting game with terrific graphics and big, detailed characters.

While most of the Lynx excitement was present at the hotel suite, there was a Lynx presence on the show floor courtesy of third party developer Telegames. Their booth contained a Lynx display kiosk which had their games available for play. Along with their already released Fidelity Chess Challenge, they were showing the first 3 holes of Krazy Ace Miniature Golf (a great fun 3D golf game), and the Taito arcade classic Qix.

▼ GAME TIPS

Warbirds is being very well received by critics and Lynx enthusiasts alike, with some stores having trouble keeping it in stock. Here's suggestions on how to get more out of this flying game.

Ammo—In combat against multiple computer opponents, always allow yourself a good supply of ammunition. If you run out, your chances of getting back to your barn to reload aren't very good.

If you're dogfighting against multiple human opponents, a smaller supply of ammo can make the game more interesting. It's easier to lose your attackers (we don't have the pinpoint tracking abilities of the computer pilots), thus giving you a fighting chance at landing.

Damage- The most interesting damage setting is Tournament. On this setting, the more hits a plane receives near it's cockpit, the quicker it will be shot down. This gives a greater tactical feel to the dogfight.

Collisions- Baiting collisions can be interesting with multiple humans, but computers pilots are pretty crazy and have a tendency to smack into you. When you're playing against computer pilots, avoid collisions.

Starting position- A dueling start is okay but the random start makes the beginning of the dogfight more interesting. You won't know where your opponent is and you or they may get a tactical advantage thanks to a good starting position.

AREAL COMBAT TIPS

Unless it's absolutely necessary, don't attack an opponent head to head. While you may inflict heavy damage, you'll probably receive just as much.

The best place to be when engaging a plane is on it tail. It can't shoot at you but you can shoot at it (this still applies to today's jet fighters).

If you can't spot an enemy plane, rapidly check out every view. Be careful, he may be obscured by your wings on the left and right views.

If you're in trouble (like the enemy is on your tail), a good defensive move is a power dive. Just point your nose straight down and gravity will help your plane get some serious speed, and you'll put some much needed space between yourself and the attacker.

Keep an eye on your airspeed (the left gauge in your cockpit view). Steep turns and climbs reduce your airspeed while diving will increase it. It can be very annoying when you try to loop the plane and find that you don't have the speed to accomplish it.

If you do find yourself going head to head with an opponent, don't waste your ammo by firing too soon. The enemy plane will look like a red line as it approaches you. When it turns into a red line with a black line on the bottom, commence firing. He'll probably start firing at you at this point also.

Next time, I'll be taking a look at Star-Linx BBS, a bulletin board with heavy Lynx support and a strong following.
—*Clinton Smith* ■

▲ **Clinton Smith** is 24 years old, and lives for his Lynx. His APE NEWSLETTER is a quarterly release dedicated to Lynx support. Contact Clint at APE, 2104 North Kostner, Chicago, IL 60639, or on GEnie at C.SMITH89.

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To receive our new Summer 1991 60 page catalogue, please send $1.50 in coin or stamp to cover the cost of mailing.

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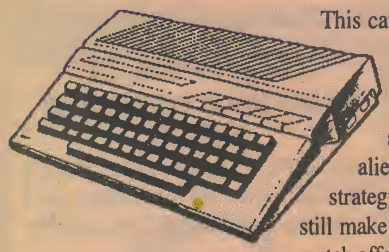
8-BIT ALERT ■ ICD Inc, is currently eliminating all of it's 8-bit inventory at greatly reduced prices. If you have been holding off purchasing hardware or software that ICD markets, NOW would be the time to give them a call at (815) 968-2228. ■ Bob Puff has purchased Computer Software Services, supplier of some unique and high quality 8-bit hardware and software. They also do 8-bit Atari computer repair. Bob will be moving the company and intends to continue to be an 8-bit original hardware accessory manufacturer. New address: CSS, PO Box 17660, Rochester, NY 14617, (716) 429-5639. ■

Taking a break...

▼ THE 8-BIT STATE

Even in the early days of Atari computers, the 800 and XL/XE's suffered the "game stigma." It didn't matter that factory assembly lines were automated and controlled by 800's, or that major books and legal documents were created on the Atari systems, or even that the 8-bit Atari featured the most complete real computer operating system architecture of any small computer of its age. The spectre of PONG and the 2600 shaded everything, as they do to this day. But the fact remains: the 8-bit computers from Atari DO play some great games!

One of my all time favorite games is STAR RAIDERS. This cartridge was one of the first games produced for the 8-bit computer systems, and was a hit from the very start. Countless systems were sold on the impression made by this first-person perspective space shoot-em-up, where you take on a galaxy full of nasty aliens. Multiple operation screens, tactical planning and strategy, arcade action, and remarkable depth and intensity still make Star Raiders a game challenge experience that will match offerings on any platform. A newer version called STAR RAIDERS II was based on a movie called 'The Last Star Fighter' and features dramatically improved graphics. However, I still prefer the original, as the newer version's aliens just don't seem to be up to the challenge.



To be able to play your games and get the most enjoyment, you need to have a joystick (or two) which work properly. The original Atari sticks often lasted for minutes. There's a wide variety of sticks available priced anywhere from about $3.00 to over $50.00 each. Joysticks in the $15.00 range generally work fine, and last through years of hard use. Wico and Best are two brands which you should have good luck with.

Another program I like was sold by Activision, and called MEGA MANIA. The thing that makes this game interesting is the wild objects which attack you. Rings, Diamonds, Steam Irons, Bow Ties, and various other household items have gone wild! The object is to shoot them all up before they clobber you. Multiple levels are more difficult by the addition of random movement of the objects, and increased speed.

And perhaps the single game to keep more 8-bit systems in use worldwide is M.U.L.E.. A multi-player space mining adventure that included strategy and teamwork with marketplace simulation, M.U.L.E. has a following to this day that is nothing short of legendary. If you find it for sale, BUY IT.

NEW CATALOGS

Several of the major 8-bit hardware and software suppliers just released new catalogs. Let's review some of their products, and in particular, concentrate on entertainment software for the classic Atari systems.

B&C COMPUTERVISION's 58 page catalog for the Atari computers just arrived. What's really unique about this catalog is that it had significant product listings for the Atari 8-bit, and even some new items for those systems. Just about every product ever offered for the 8-bit is in there.

Another popular supplier is Best Electronics. Known primarily for their Atari replacement parts, Best also carries a large stock of games on cartridge and diskette. Some cartridges are offered without the outer shell at a reduced price. Best also just released their 1991 catalog, which is a truly amazing resource in itself.

Virtually all of the classic Atari games are in those catalogs. Cartridge titles like Star Raiders, Battle Zone, Caverns of Mars, Centipede, Defender, Donkey Kong, KaBoom!, Joust, Pac Man, Star Raiders II, Super Breakout, Space Invaders, and Q*Bert (to name just a few) are listed, with prices ranging from $5.00 to $20.00 each.

Some of the newer games for the XL/XE series computers and the XE Game system were also listed. These cartridges generally are a bit more expensive, since they are what Atari calls "Super Cartridges." AirBall, Crystal Castles, Crime Busters, Food Fight, Mario Brothers, One on One, and Summer Games are offered at under $25 each.

B&C also sports a wide assortment of Public Domain and Shareware software, much too large to list here. Of course there are many other sources for PD/SW programs, such as user group libraries, online services, and bulletin boards. Look for the all time PD favorites like TRICKY TRACK and FLOYD THE DROID, games that rival anything commercial in quality and playability. Check out the 8-bit Resource in this issue of ATARIUSER for details on other sources. —Chuck Steinman ■

B&C ComputerVisions (408) 749-1003, 3257 Kifer Road, Santa Clara, CA 95051. ■ **Best Electronics** (408) 243-6950, 2021 The Alameda, Suite 290, San Jose, CA 95126.

▲ Chuck Steinman is one of the few remaining active developers for the Atari 8-bit systems. If you have any suggestions for unique products for the classic Ataris, he would like to hear from you! He can be contacted on GEnie and Delphi at username DataQue, or CIS PPN: 71777,3223.

AtariUser Resource #4

Many of you classic users have had difficulties getting product, or knowing who offers what. Well, here is your AtariUser 8-bit RESOURCE to answer all of those questions!

▼ **MAJOR HARDWARE/SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS FOR 8-BIT PRODUCTS:** **Computer Software Services** is your contact for high performance upgrades. CSS offers several different ROM upgrades for both Atari 8-bit disk drives and computers. In addition to system RAM upgrades and a flock of utilities, there is a product called the MULTIPLEXER which will allow multiple classic computers to be interconnected, with the capability of sharing peripherals. The ultimate upgrade for the XL/XE systems offered by CSS is the BLACK BOX, which is a combination serial port, parallel printer port, hard disk host adapter, and floppy disk enhancer. A couple of additional unique features built into the 'BB' are a machine code debugger, and a print screen button. An expansion connector on the 'BB' will allow connection of parallel floppy drives (availability to be announced). CSS offers complete hard drive solutions, or just the components you need to finish off your custom design. You can talk to Bob at (716) 429-5639, or by mail at CSS, P.O. Box 17660, Rochester, NY 14617. CSS also operates a 24-hour BBS which can be called at (716) 247-7157, using 300, 1200, or 2400 baud.

Innovative Concepts offers a wide assortment of used software and hardware, in addition to several different memory upgrades for your computer and enhancements for your disk drives. 'IC' has a large list of Printshop clipart and printer drivers, and a whole line of budget priced public domain, shareware and commercial software. Contact Mark at (313) 293-0730, or write to I.C. at 31172 Shawn Drive, Warren MI 48093.

One of the original and reliable resources for classic users looking for dependable products is **ICD, Inc.** Sadly, ICD is clearing out their 8-bit products (this may be your last chance to get that ICD product you have had your eye on!). One of ICD's best known products is their disk operating system called SPARTADOS. The latest version of SpartaDOS is called SDX, and is a plug in piggy-back cartridge, with many advanced features including a MSDOS look to their command line. A real-time clock cartridge called RTIME-8 is also offered by ICD and supported by SpartaDOS. If you need more RAM, their RAMBO upgrade will allow your XL (800XL and 1200XL) to be upgraded to 256K of memory, which is supported by various utilities and SpartaDOS. The P:R: connection is an inexpensive alternative to other serial and parallel adapters, and will work on all of the 8-bit systems (1200XL will require minor modifications). If you only need a printer interface, the PRINTER CONNECTION is the answer. For a complete solution to connectivity, the MIO (Multi-I/O) box will work with 600XL, 800XL, or 130XE (XE requires an adapter) computer to provide

Mo'

serial, parallel, and hard disk support. MIO's are available in either 256K or 1Meg RAM configurations, with that RAM usable as a print spooler and/or RAMdisk selectable by the built-in configuration menu. The complete OSS line of languages including BASIC XL, BASIC XE, MAC/65, and Action! are also marketed by ICD. ICD can be contacted at (815) 968-2228 by voice, or (815) 968-2229 is their BBS number. Mail can be sent to ICD Inc., 1220 Rock Street, Rockford Illinois 61101-1437.

ReeveSoft, as featured in the June '91 issue of ATARIUSER, offers the Diamond Graphical Operating System. This is a plug-in cartridge which contains the complete GOS in ROM (a disk version is also available). They also have several programs which are Diamond compatible, including Diamond Write, Diamond Paint, and Diamond News Station. For more details on these, refer to the June ATARIUSER magazine, or contact ReeveSoft by phone (312) 393-2317, or mail at: 29W150 Old Farm Lane, Warrenville, IL 60555.

Alpha Systems produces a variety of software and hardware products for your favorite machine. The Parrot II sound digitizer allows you to capture sounds with your computer, and play them back later. Alpha Systems also markets a whole series of books and software relating to software protection and system optimization. They can be contacted by phone at (216) 374-7469, or you can write them at 1012 Skyland Drive, Macedonia, OH 44056.

DataQue, maker of the Turbo-816 CPU upgrade, is one of the few 8-bit developers still expanding their product line by developing new products and acquiring a few from others. Recently DataQue added the TransKey adapter to their catalog, which is a small PC board which will allow you to attach an IBM/PC/XT/AT keyboard to your 8-bit system. Other products offered by DataQue include a line of MS-DOS cross-development utilities (to target the Atari 8-bit systems), the Turbo-Calc spreadsheet, and currently in development the Turbo-C8 'C' language development cartridge. For more information, contact DataQue on GEnie/Delphi with the username of DataQue, or CIS PPN of 71777,3223. Additional information can be also requested by mail at Post Office Box 134, Ontario, OH 44862-0134.

▼ REPLACEMENT PARTS, SOFTWARE, AND HARDWARE:

These companies have many hard-to-find hardware and software items at reasonable prices. If you need a replacement part for one of your systems, or a program no longer in distribution, here are *the* contacts to check first—in alphabetical order...

American Techna-Vision 15338 Inverness Street, San Leandro, CA 94579 (415) 352-3787

Best Electronics 2021 The Alameda, Suite 290, San Jose, CA 95126 (408) 243-6950

B&C ComputerVisions 3256 Kifer Road, Santa Clara, CA 95051 (408) 749-1003

San Jose Computers 1278 Alma Ct, San Jose, CA 95712 (408) 945-5080

▼ SOFTWARE/HARDWARE MAIL ORDER HOUSES

These mail order outlets offer a wide variety of software and/or hardware for your 8-bit Atari system...

Black Moon Systems P.O. Box 152, Wind Gap, PA 18091

Compsult Post Office Box 3233, San Luis Obispo, CA 93403-3233 (805) 544-6616

Marcel Programming 298 Fifth Avenue, Suite 141, New York, NY 10001

Software Clinic 4916 Del-Ray Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814 (301) 656-7983

Team Computers 22205 Kelly Road, East Detroit, MI 48021 (313) 445-2983

Toad Computers 556 Baltimore Annapolis Blvd, Severna Park, Maryland 21146 (301) 544-6943

▼ PUBLIC DOMAIN AND SHAREWARE SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTORS:

If you are interested in Public Domain, or shareware software, and do not have a modem, or access to GEnie, CompuServe, or other online services, the following companies offer such software at reasonable prices...

Software Infinity 642 East Waring Avenue, State College, PA 16801

Sagamore Software 2104 Arapahoe Dr., Lafayette, IN 47905

BellCom PO Box 1043, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9J7A5

BRE Software 352 West Bedford Ave, Suite 104, Fresno, CA 93711

M.W.P.D.S. 890 N. Huntington St, Medina, OH 44256

Vulcan Software P.O.B. 692, Manassas, VA 22111-0692

▼ NATIONAL MAGAZINES WHICH SUPPORT THE ATARI 8-BIT SYSTEMS:

Prices listed are for one year subscriptions. Some magazines run promotional specials from time to time, so inquire about any specials when you order. All prices are in US dollars...

AtariUser (your favorite) 113 W College St, Covina, CA 91723 (818) 332-0372. 12 Issues/year @ $18. Free from user groups and stores

Current Notes 122 N. Johnson Rd., Sterling, VA 22170 (703) 450-4761. 10 issues/year @ $27. Participating user group rates available

Atari Interface Magazine c/o Unicorn Publications. 3487 Braeburn Circle Ann Arbor, MI 48108 (313) 973-8825. 12 issues/year @ $18. Participating user group rates available

ZMAGAZINE Online (electronic newsletter) Z*Net/Rovac Industries P.O. Box 59, Middlesex, NJ 08846. BBS: (908) 968-8148, monthly, available on GEnie, CompuServe, Delphi, F-Net, and others ■

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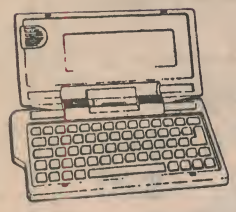
PORTFOLIO ALERT ■ There is finally a hard disk unit really available for the Portfolio! The BSE Company, 14701 Candeda Place, Tustin, CA 92680, (714)-832-4316, has developed the Flashdrive hard disk unit. The unit interfaces to the Portfolio via the Parallel Interface. The 20mb version sells for $499. ■ **Hold on to your Atari Portfolio, it just may help save the world some day!** The palmtop plays a key role in two sequences in the new Schwarzennegger blockbuster, "Terminator 2: Judgement Day." In the first sequence, the young boy hero uses his Portfolio to break into a bank's automatic teller machine (We'd like to know if that program is public domain!!). The other is later on during one of the film's many climaxes, in another break-in with a locked door. ■



Vacation Time!

▼ THE PORTFOLIO AT PLAY?

■ **Tomfoolery...** Tricks and practical joke programs include FS.EXE. This program is hailed as the first "Flight Simulator for the Portfolio." Well, it is, kind of, but don't expect any resemblance to Microsoft's Flight Simulator. Another one is PSI.EXE, a Portfolio System Information program, similar to Norton's System Information program. PSI, however, makes your portfolio appear to be a bit more than what it is. Run it for people who say the Portfolio is not a real machine, and watch their jaws drop.

■ **B.J. Gleason** is an instructor of Computer Science at The American University in Washington D.C., and he's been programming for over a decade now. He's the author of over two dozen utilities and games, including PBASIC, the 'freeware' BASIC interpreter designed specifically for the Portfolio. His Compuserve ID is 73337,2011.

It's vacation time, and the big question on your mind is, "What kinds of games and entertainment programs are available for the Portfolio?" Here's a list of fun stuff, available for downloading from the APORTFOLIO forum on CompuServe as well as GEnie, the Atari BBS, and public bulletin boards.

GAMES

One of the most popular games for any computer system would have to be the now classic Tetris. The implementors of this game for the Portfolio got around the 40 characters by 8 lines screen limitation in an unique way. To play, you hold the computer sideways. There are two versions: The first was PRTRIS.ZIP, which was quickly followed by TETRAD.EXE and TETRAD.DOC. TETRAD is more advanced than PRTRIS, and allows for left and right handed play, but PRTRIS is about half the size of TETRAD.

There are also a number of skill games designed for the Portfolio. Can you make all the squares disappear? Try MERLIN.ZIP. Simon Sez: Can you repeat the sequence? Twenty random number/tone combinations is quite a challenge in SIMON.ZIP. Can you knock out the happy face with the bouncing ball in FENCE.EXE? Do you have steady hands and nerves of steel? If you think you are up to the challenge, try to find the all the bombs in LMIND.EXE. Skill levels range from SILLY to NUTS depending on the number of bombs.

SPIN.EXE challenges you to arrange 20 numbers in order by rotating 4 at a time. In REV.EXE you must order the numbers by reversing the list. PPUZZL.ZIP is the classic 15 piece board puzzle that you played in the car on the way to the shore when you were a kid. There is also MASTMD.EXE, where you try to reveal a secret four digit number in ten guesses or less.

TIP *If the filename ends in .ZIP or .ARC, that means that it is a compressed library containing several files. To extract the files, you will need the PKUNZIP or ARC programs.*

Of course, you would expect the traditional collection of board games: Chess, PCHESS.ZIP, Othello, OTHELL.ZIP and PFOUR.ZIP, the game where you try to get four pieces in a row. And what about Tic-Tac-Toe? Give TTT.EXE a try.

No collection of computer games would be complete without BlackJack and Star Trek. CASINO.COM is the game of blackjack which won the APORTFOLIO programming contest last year. TREK.ZIP is the standard game of you-against-the-Klingons.

GRAPHICS

Due to the size of the screen, the graphics are a bit limited, only 240 by 64 pixels. Still, there is still a lot that can be done. Don Messerli of the Software Vineyard has developed the .PGC (Portfolio Graphics Compressed) standard. This standard, along with his excellent program, PGSHOW, allows for 9 frames per second of animation. It is very impressive. PBASIC also supports the .PGC standard, and allows up to about 4 frames per second.

Many pictures are available for Portfolio. When you display DESKTO.PGC, it makes the Portfolio appear to be a Macintosh. MACCLA.PGC displays the classic Mac Logo, and MACSTY.PGC is the stylized Mac logo.

For impressive animation, pick up ADEMO.ZIP. This file contains 18 pictures on dominos being knocked over. The program included with this archive is not very fast. To see the animation in real-time (or very close to it), use PGSHO2.ZIP, which includes a batch file for displaying the dominos, or ADEMO2.BAS which is a PBASIC program to display the files.

To create your own pictures, PGCG.SIT is a .PCG grabber for the Macintosh. PGED11.ZIP is a PGC editor the PC, requires EGA or VGA, and allows importing of MacPaint and Print Shop graphics. PGLIB.ZIP us a 'C' library of Portfolio that allow for reading, writing, and displaying PGC files. PGSPEC.ZIP contains the specifications for the PGC standard.

MUSIC

The portfolio's built in speaker is capable of producing a wide range of tone, and the authors of the following programs make full use of it.

TIP *Programs that use the speaker will drain the batteries faster. Use the AC adapter when running these programs.*

YANKEE.ARC is a little music system for the Portfolio. Includes the file ANSI.SYS and plays "Yankee Doodle Dandy." With this file, you can also play AAF.ARC, the "Advance Australia Fair." Finally, there is my personal favorite, and I would assume the favorite of anybody wishing to hear the phrase "Good Morning Mr. Phelps..." MI.BAT plays the theme from Mission: Impossible.

For "playing" the portfolio interactively, there is PTONE.COM, which will play music files, or allow you to play music from the keyboard. PTONE.DOC contains the instructions. —*B. J. Gleason* ■

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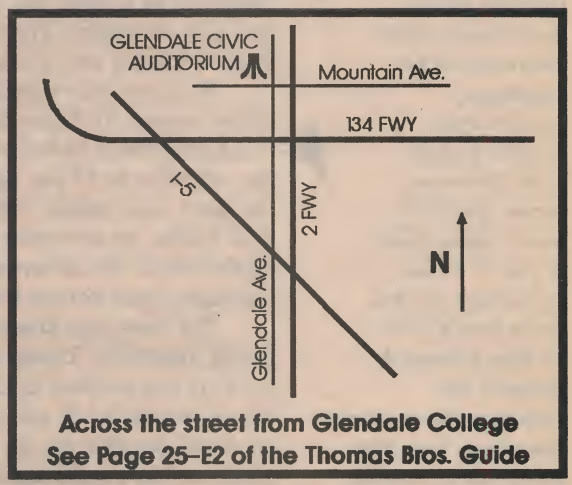

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MIDI ALERT ■ **Steinberg/Jones has released** the newest members of their Synthworks patch editor series. These are for the Yamaha SY/TG77 (includes ability to convert DX7 patch banks) and the Korg Wavestation. An earlier M1 patch editor has been upgraded to support the Korg T series synths. $259 each from Steinberg/Jones, 17700 Raymer Street, Suite 1001, Northridge, CA 93125, (818) 993-4091.

■ **Scorpion Systems announces the release** of sYbil version 2.5, a state-of-the-art MIDI software performance instrument and mapper. You can now record and replay tracks interactively or save them as standard MIDI files. Call the demo line at (313) 827-1444 for an example. $99 from Scorpion Systems Group, 18899 W. 12 Mile Rd, Lathrup Village, MI 48076, (313) 356-7241. ■

'Sounds' Like Fun...

Let's try an experiment. Boot up one of your favorite Atari ST games and play it for a few minutes. Now, turn off the monitor sound and keep on playing — not quite as much fun, is it? Whether you consciously pay attention or just let it fill the background, music and sound effects play a major role in your gaming enjoyment.

This is no computer-age surprise. Storytellers from Spielberg to the ancient Greeks have relied on music and sound effects to help set the stage and trigger emotional cues. What has improved, however, is the depth and quality of sound that our computers can generate to pull us into their fantasy worlds.

Computer sound started as a monotone beep. Not particularly inspiring, although it survived that way for quite a while on PC computers. As computer technology grew, so did the sound generation capability. One of the premier systems for its time was the Atari 800 computer which could provide three independent sound voices from its synthesizer chip, a legacy continued in the ST models.

The next big step was digitized sound. This was particularly cool for providing realistic sound effects, sword chops in Dungeon Master. Although even the Atari 800 could play digitized sound, basic sound files require too much storage space for routine use as background music. One minute of music at CD fidelity takes up roughly 500 K of disk space — double that for a stereo file! Advances in data compression (and a lot of repetition in playback) have promoted use of digitized sound in today's computer games.

Atari users who wanted to explore digitized sound can choose between ST Replay from MichTron and Digisound from Alpha Systems. Alpha Systems subsequently released Beat Box, which lets the ST play digitized drum and or other sound files like a drum machine. Two other programs, Quartet and TCB Tracker, are composing packages to create your own digitized music. You can save song files as program code to put high quality music into your BASIC, C, or assembly programs.

The most recent advance have been to utilize MIDI for gaming soundtracks. This has been largely fueled by availability of low cost consumer multitimbral synthesizers — primarily the Roland MT-32 and its relatives. Gamers who had previously struggled with the crudest home computer sound system now have sophisticated, stereo soundtracks to accompany their quests. As an added benefit, MIDI data requires far less disk space than digitized sound.

Sierra On-Line remains at the forefront for utilizing MIDI music within their games. Atari gamers can hear the results in Sierra's Hero's Quest, as well as the Leisure Suit Larry, King's Quest, and Space Quest series. Other Atari games featuring MIDI support include Ultima III and IV (but not V) from Origin Systems, Future Wars from Interplay Productions, and Magnetic Images' Gold of the Realm.

Virtually every game with MIDI output is standardized around the Roland MT-32 synthesizer (see last two MIDI columns for more details). You can try to use a different synth but there is no telling how it will sound. These programs were written assuming particular sounds would be triggered from the MT-32 ROMs. If your synth plays a steel drum instead of the expected pipe organ—well, something is going to be lost in translation! In addition, the MT-32 supports eight independent synth parts plus drums (played on MIDI channels 2 through 10). Depending on your synth, you may only be able to hear a small piece of the overall soundtrack. Sierra provides information on the MIDI arrangements for all of its games through its BBS [(209) 683-4463] which may help you setup your synth for best results.

There are two programs in the Atari roundtable of the GEnie BBS which highlight MIDI support. ECOLOGY (file 12313) is a version of a European game that never made U.S. release. It's fun to play and has a great MIDI soundtrack (uses MIDI channels 1 through 3). Play the music through the monitor speaker, then turn on MIDI output and listen to the tremendous improvement!

The other program is file 17072, a shareware game of "Name That Tune". It randomly plays a song file while you and a competitor use joysticks to pick its name from an on-screen roster. Songs use MIDI channels 1 through 3, and are in standard MIDI file format (110 supplied!). The instructions tell you how to create your own playlist from any set of MIDI files. The program comes set up for use with floppy disks. I found that if you put all the program files within the song file folder, you can run it from a hard drive. This may give you over 112 files in the folder which the normal Atari desktop doesn't like. I use NeoDesk and simply reset the max number of file per folder from the Desktop Options menu. —*Jim Pierson-Perry* ■

▲ **Jim Pierson-Perry** is a research clinical chemist and musician, as well as a popular columnist in computer magazines. This fits neatly with his latent schizophrenia, or so they claim. No it doesn't. Yes it does, now shut up.

■ **Game soundtracks these days** are an integral piece of product design and offer new opportunities for composers. Some musicians who have already taken the plunge are French new age musician Jean-Michel Jarre and Bob Siebenberg (from the group Supertramp). Jarre did the music for Mindscape's Captain Blood adventure game while Siebenberg scored Sierra On-Line's Space Quest III and IV. In fact, Siebenberg and the Sierra crew's work for Space Quest III garnered the Computer Gaming World Magazine's award for excellence in musical achievement.

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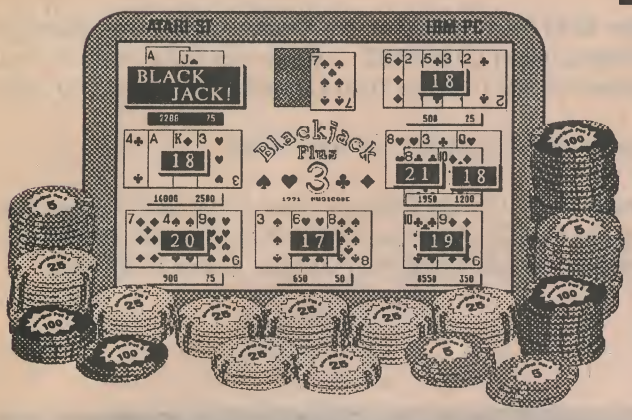

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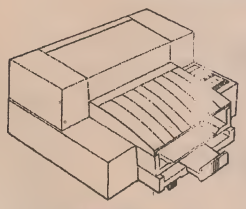

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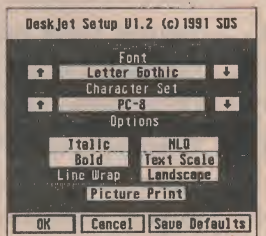

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AtariWatch '91 — What's Up Where..?

▼ Here's the schedule of 1991 Atari appearances as scheduled at press time. Entries marked *BobFest...* are appearances by Atari's Bob Brodie at clubs, dealers, or small non-Atari specific shows.

August 8-11 GEN CON, the world's largest Game Convention (12,000+), at MECCA in Milwaukee Wisconsin. MilAtari Ltd. will host a computer gaming section again.

August 23-25 Dusseldorf Atarimesse. This is the huge all-Atari show held annually in Germany. Contact Alwin Stumph, Frankfurterstrasse 89-91, 6096 Raunheim. Phone 49-6142-2090, FAX 49-6142-209180.

September 14-15 The Southern California ATARI Computer Faire, Version 5.0, also known as THE GLENDALE SHOW has been confirmed for September 14 and 15, 1991. Contact: H.A.C.K.S., 249 N. Brand Bl. #321, Glendale, CA 91203, or call John King Tarpinian, Faire Chairperson, 818-246-7286.

October 12-13 WAACE AtariFest '91, Sheraton Reston Hotel, Washington D.C./Virginia, contact J.D.BARNES via GEnie or by mail to WACCE Vendor Coordinator, C/o John D. Barnes, 7710 Chatham Rd, Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

October 21-25 Fall COMDEX Las Vegas Nevada

November 23-24 Chicago Computer Show BY ATARI. Contact Larry Grauzas, P.O. Box 8788, Waukegan, IL 60079-8788, phone 708-566-0671. Administrated by the Lake County Atari Computer Enthusiasts (LCACE).

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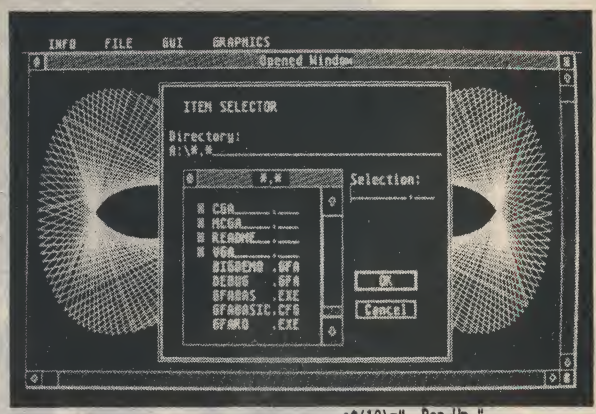

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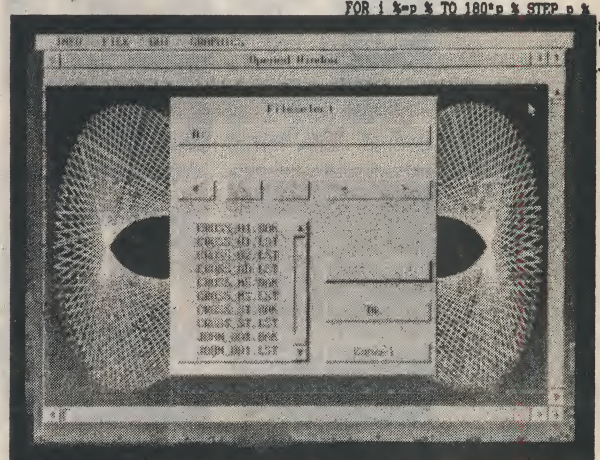
a$(11)=" _Alert Box "
a$(12)=""
a$(13)=" GRAPHICS "
a$(14)=" file "
a$(15)=" figure _2 "
a$(16)=" figure _3 "
a$(17)=" figure _4 "
MENU a$()
OPENW #1,x1%,y1%,x2%,y2%,-1
TITLEW #1,"Opened Window"
drawfigure
FILESELECT "A:\*.*","",name$
RETURN
PROCEDURE drawfigure
  xalt_%=ADD(ADD(w_%,w_%),x_%)
  yalt_%=ADD(h_%,y_%)
  FOR i_%=p_% TO 180*p_% STEP p_%
```



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